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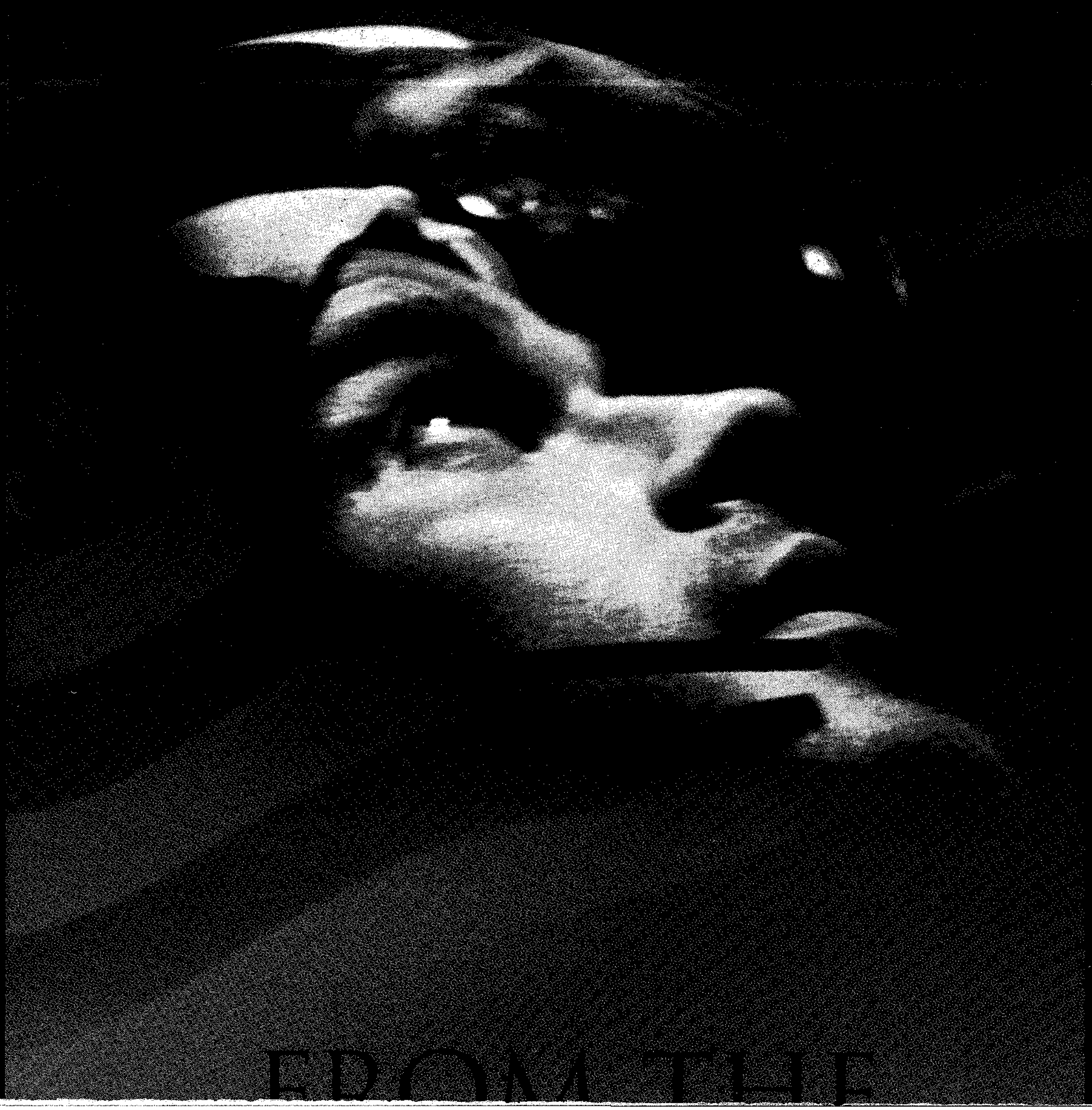

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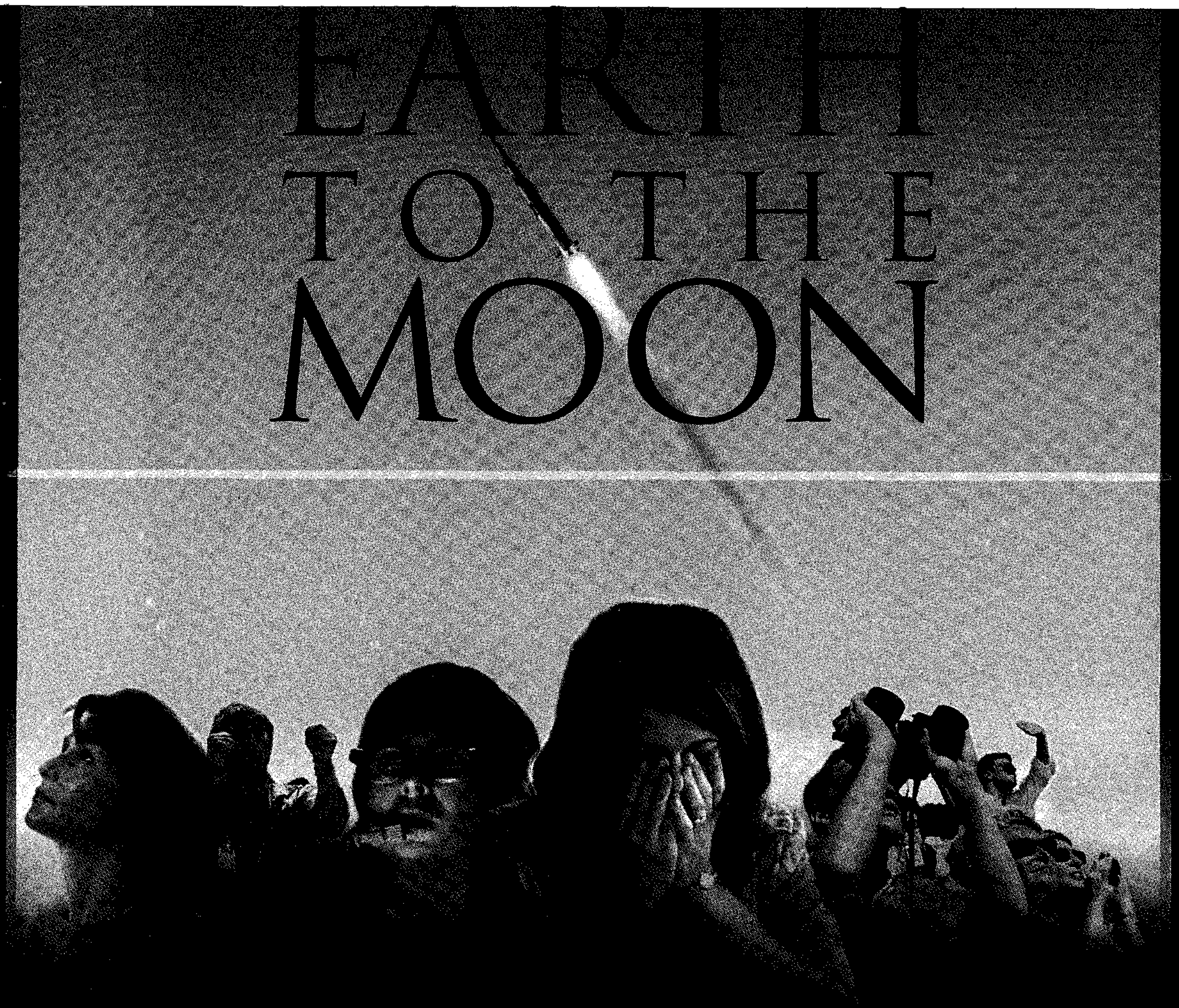

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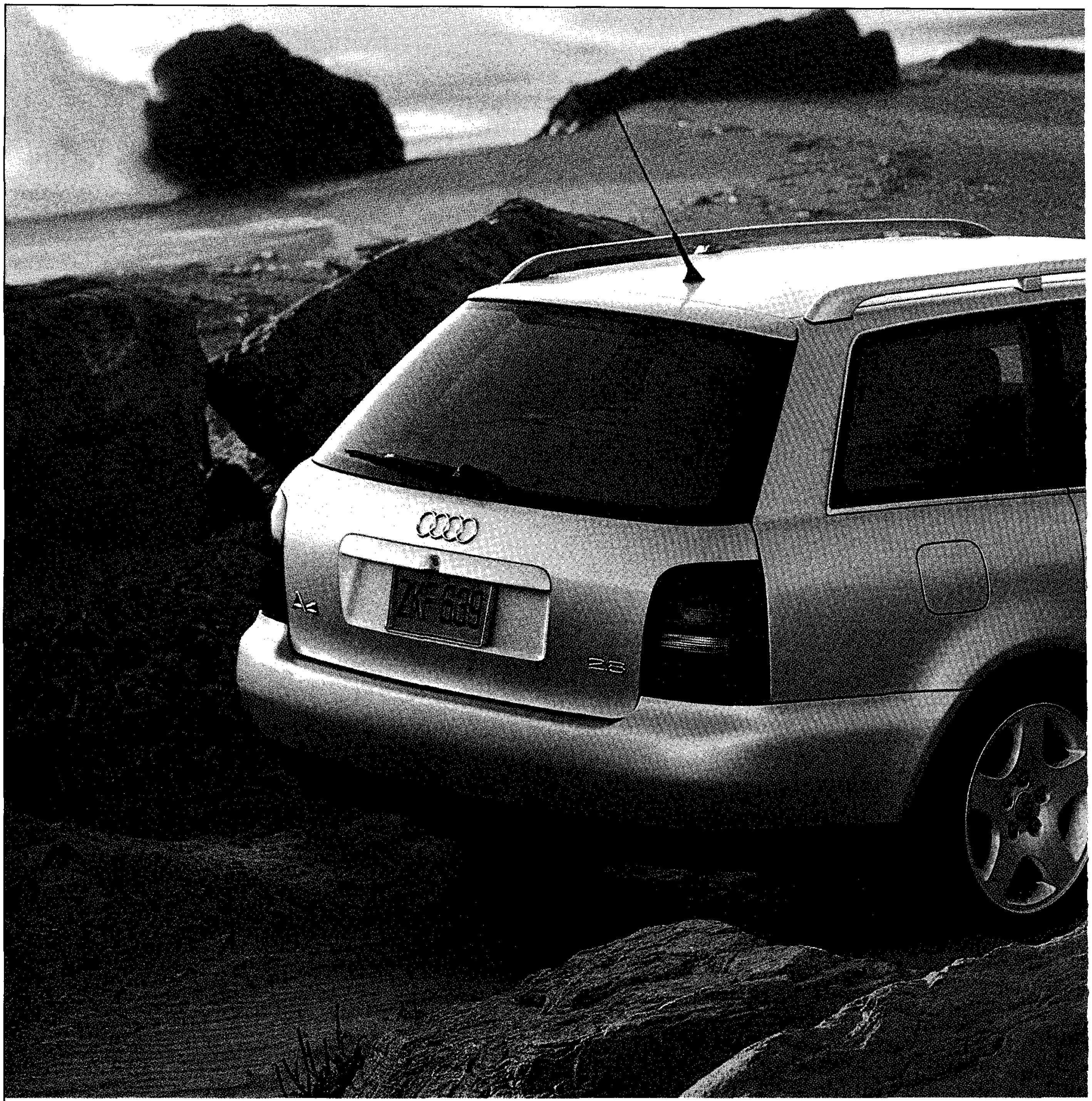

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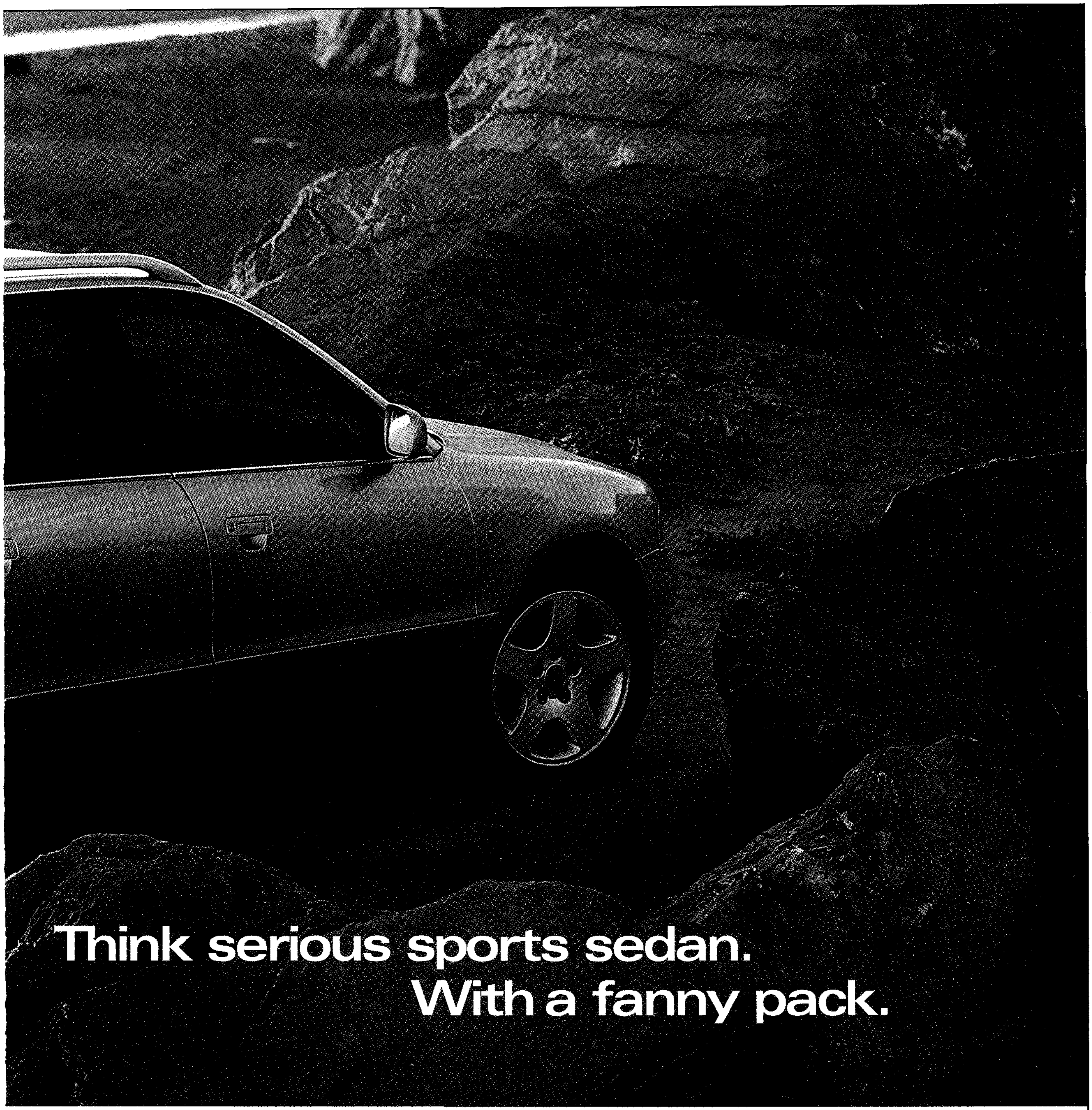

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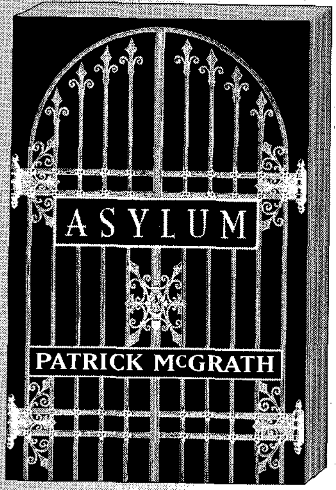

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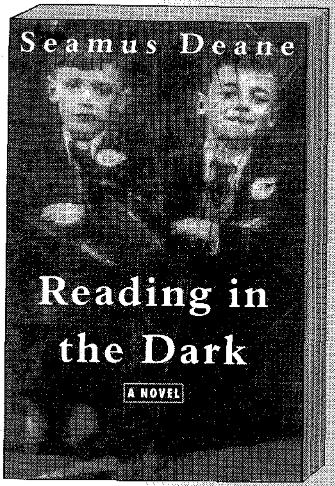

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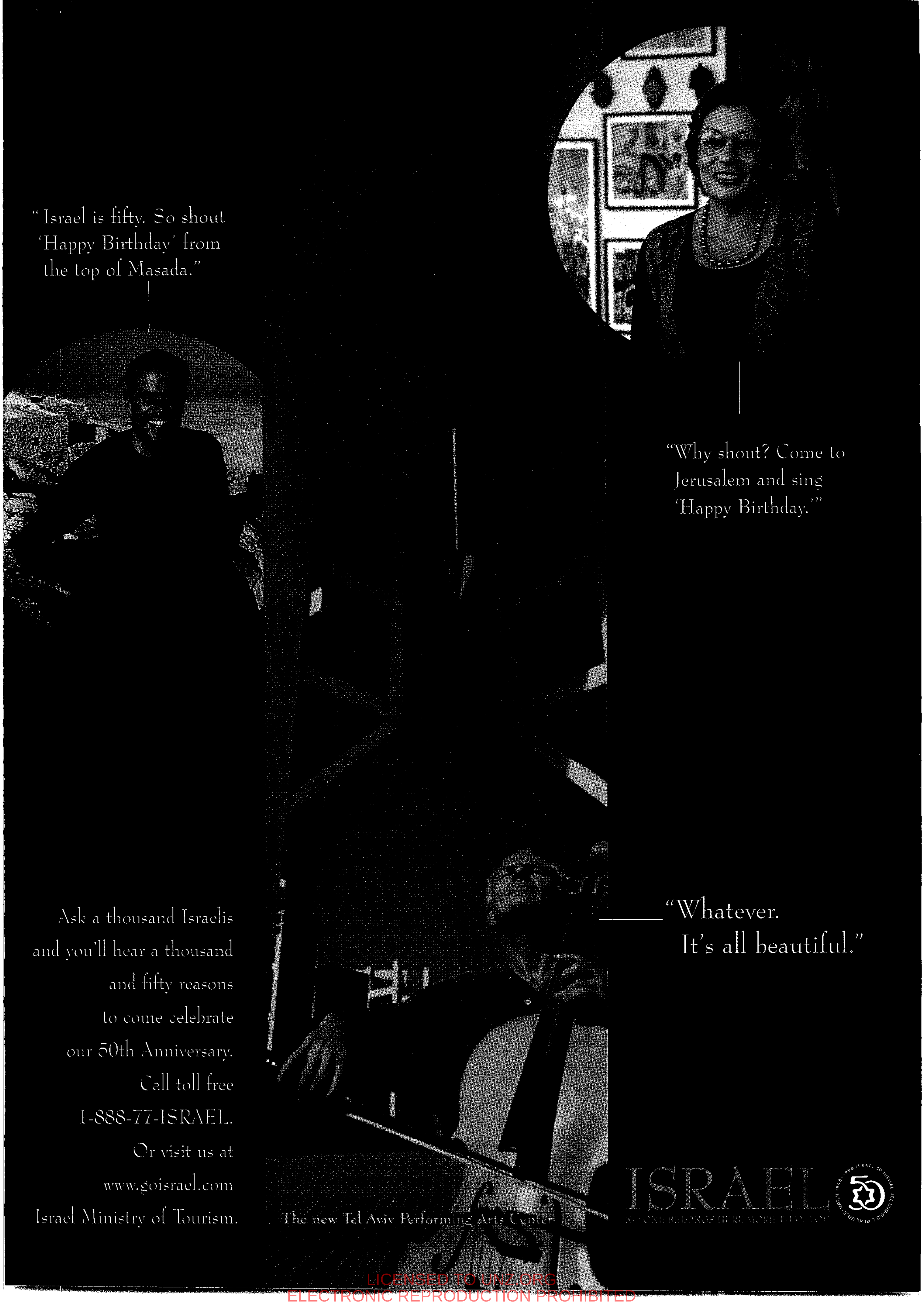

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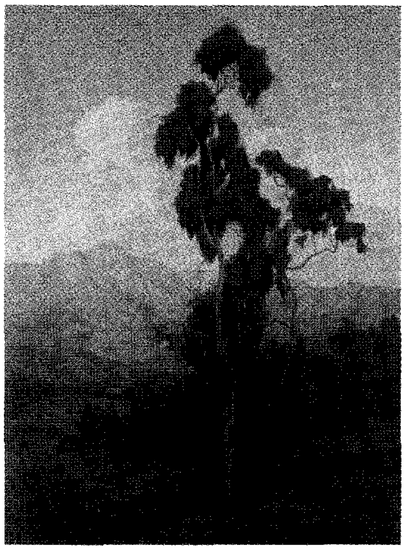

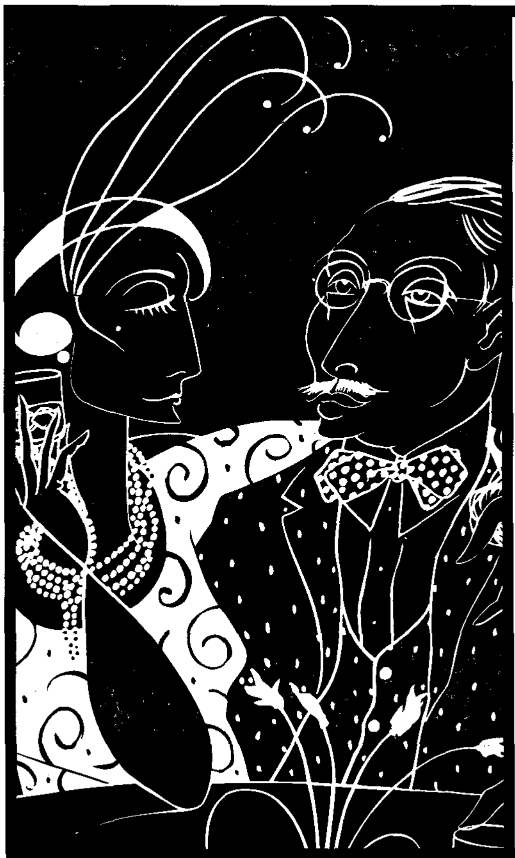

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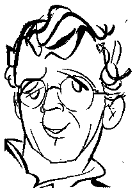

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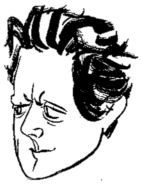

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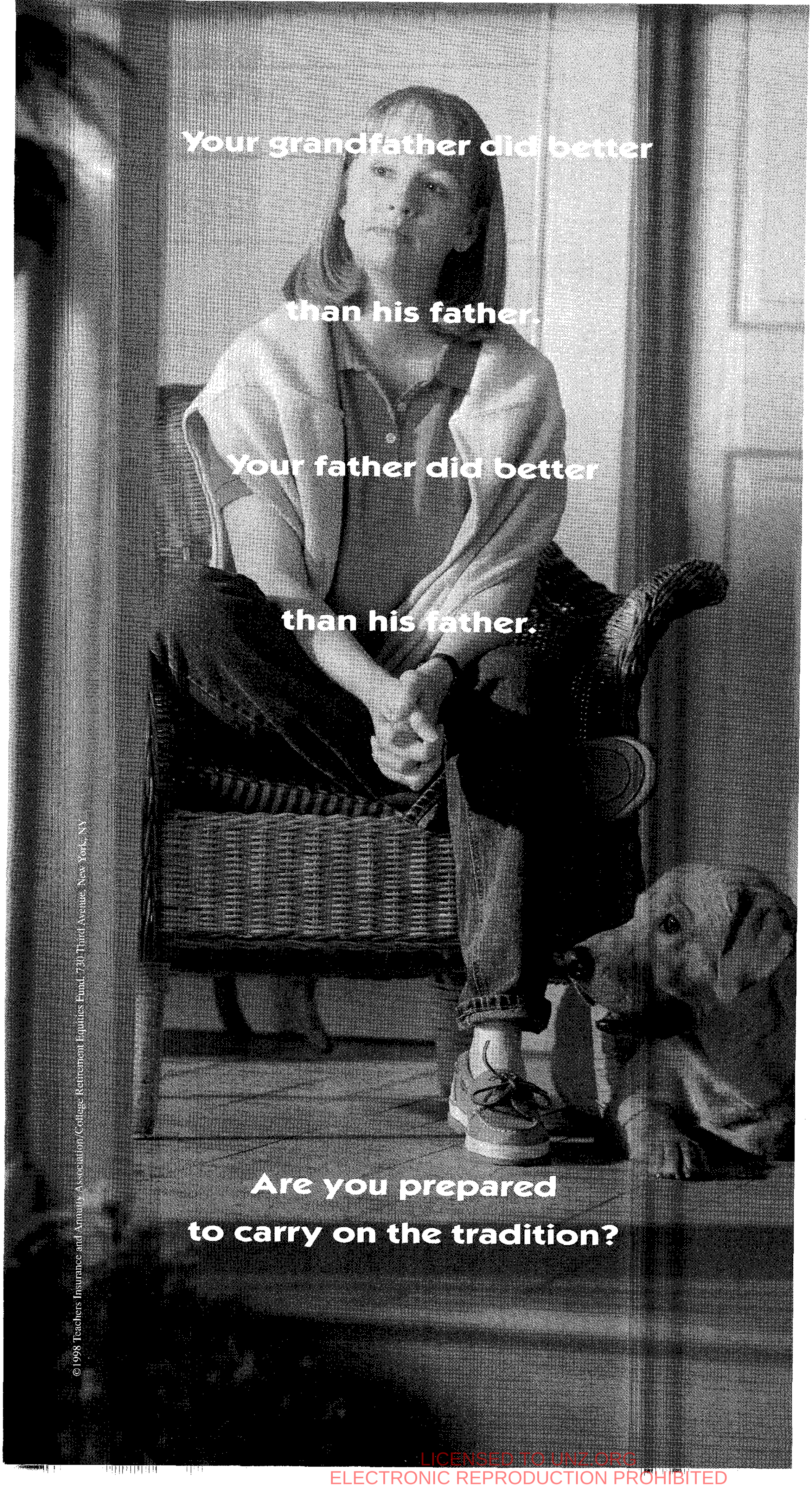
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COMMENT

AFRICAN OVERTURE

This time, Mr. Clinton is not just reacting.

To the extent that President Clinton can be said to have developed a style in foreign affairs, it has been less as an actor than as a reactor, and a reluctant one at that. He has consistently preferred to respond to international events only when neglecting to do so has become a political liability. Even then, his reflexes have often failed, as he effectively acknowledged last week in apologizing for America's head-in-the-sand response to the Rwandan genocide, in 1994. This pattern of reluctant international leadership makes Mr. Clinton's current tour of Africa—of twelve days' duration, the longest foreign trip of his Presidency—stand out as remarkable. The President was under no pressure whatever to make this journey; he risked no criticism for *not* making it. Moreover, its itinerary was under discussion well before the world had ever heard of Monica Lewinsky. Africa wasn't on the American agenda; he chose to put it there. If his professed aim—"to help to introduce the people of the United States to a new Africa, an Africa whose political and economic accomplishments grow more impressive each month"—sounds like brochure copy, it's still a good idea. In urging Americans, and the rest of the world, to take seriously the promises and problems of African politics, Mr. Clinton has recognized a ripe opportunity for international leadership which he could have more easily, and more comfortably, continued to ignore.

Africa's past marginalization—and, worse, its degradation—by the Euro-American masters of the "international community" actually helped create the opening that Mr. Clinton has stepped into. After the Soviet empire melted down, most of Africa ceased to have any great strategic or economic significance in the immediate schemes of the major powers. To the American imagination, fed by vivid stories of carnage, poverty, and disease, the place looked hopeless anyway; Washington policymakers were in the habit of describing the entire continent, absurdly, as a "write-off." This post-Cold War neglect wasn't all bad for Africa: the United States no longer felt obliged to prop up its more brutal client regimes, and a new generation of African leaders saw the West's withdrawal as an occasion to take responsibility for their own political destinies.

Four years ago, in April of 1994, the extremes of the new Africa were thrown into stark contrast. As the people of South Africa went to the polls to put a final end to the vast criminal edifice of the apartheid state by electing

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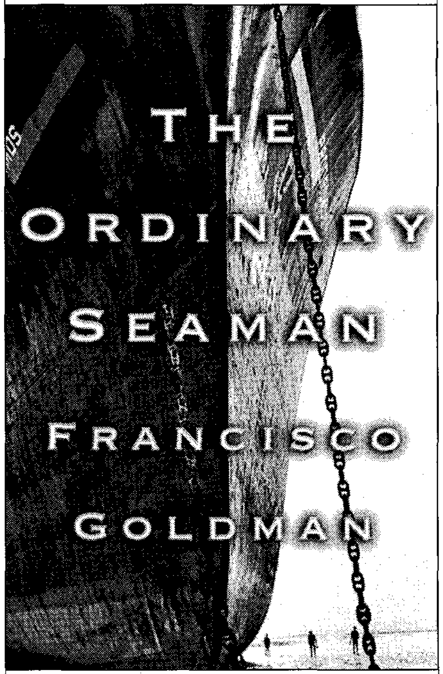

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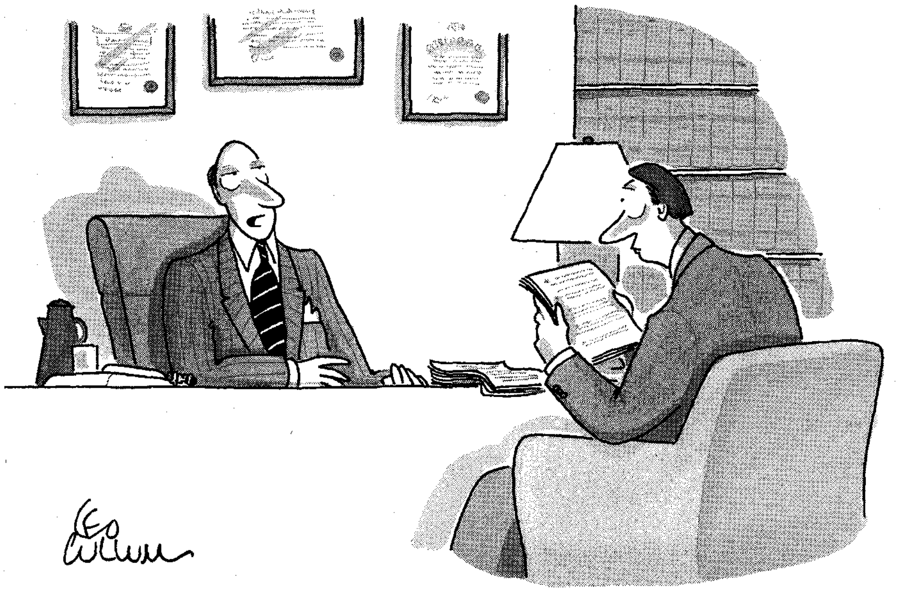

"Why don't we take a break? Your testimony is beginning to sound rehearsed."

• •

Nelson Mandela their President, the people of Rwanda were being decimated by a state-sponsored genocide. For postcolonial Africa, it was the best and the worst of times, and against the background of South Africa's hope and Rwanda's horror it became clear that the West's relationship to the continent had been irrevocably altered. Having tolerated both apartheid and genocide, the West no longer had much credibility in Africa. With the emergence last year of a powerful pan-African military alliance that combatted the threat of resurgent genocide in central Africa and drove Mobutu Sese Seko from power in the Congo, Africans signalled that it was no longer they but Westerners who risked being marginalized in the continent's affairs.

Perhaps it is President Clinton's gift for demonstrative empathy—and for creating occasions where he has no better alternative than to show it—that made him see Africa's growing estrangement from Western policy as an invitation for renewed engagement. In any case, a dramatic confluence of events—the Cold War's end, apartheid's defeat, the appalling international failure in Rwanda, and the emergence of new, self-reliant African leaders—offered him a chance to try to wipe the slate clean and create new conditions, against which a coherent and productive Africa policy might be made. Toward that end, the President's uneasy visits to Rwanda and South Africa give reason to hope that the serious work, which still lies ahead, will actually be undertaken. What remains to be seen is how patient the United States will be with an Africa whose most beloved leader, Nelson Mandela, declares that critics of his friendship with Libya and Iran can "go and throw themselves into a pool."

Nearly twenty years ago, the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe was invited to speak in Berlin on "The Necessity for Cultural Exchange in a Spirit of Partnership Between North and South." Taking the desirability of such an exchange as self-evident, Achebe cautioned against the facile, rhetorical use of the word "partnership." To drive his point home, he recalled that "a British governor of Rhodesia in the nineteen-fifties defined the partnership between black and white in his territory, apparently without intending any sarcasm, as the partnership between the horse and its rider." That, in Achebe's view, "was, and is, the fundamental attitude of Europe to Africa," and until it changed dialogue would be impossible. After all, he said, "You may talk to a horse but you don't wait for a reply."

Achebe's words bear remembering as the Clintons and their huge entourage gallop across the continent, promoting partnership and discovering that Africans talk back. For the United States to engage in any meaningful way with a new Africa, Africans will have to believe that they are being not just listened to but heard. —PHILIP GOUREVITCH

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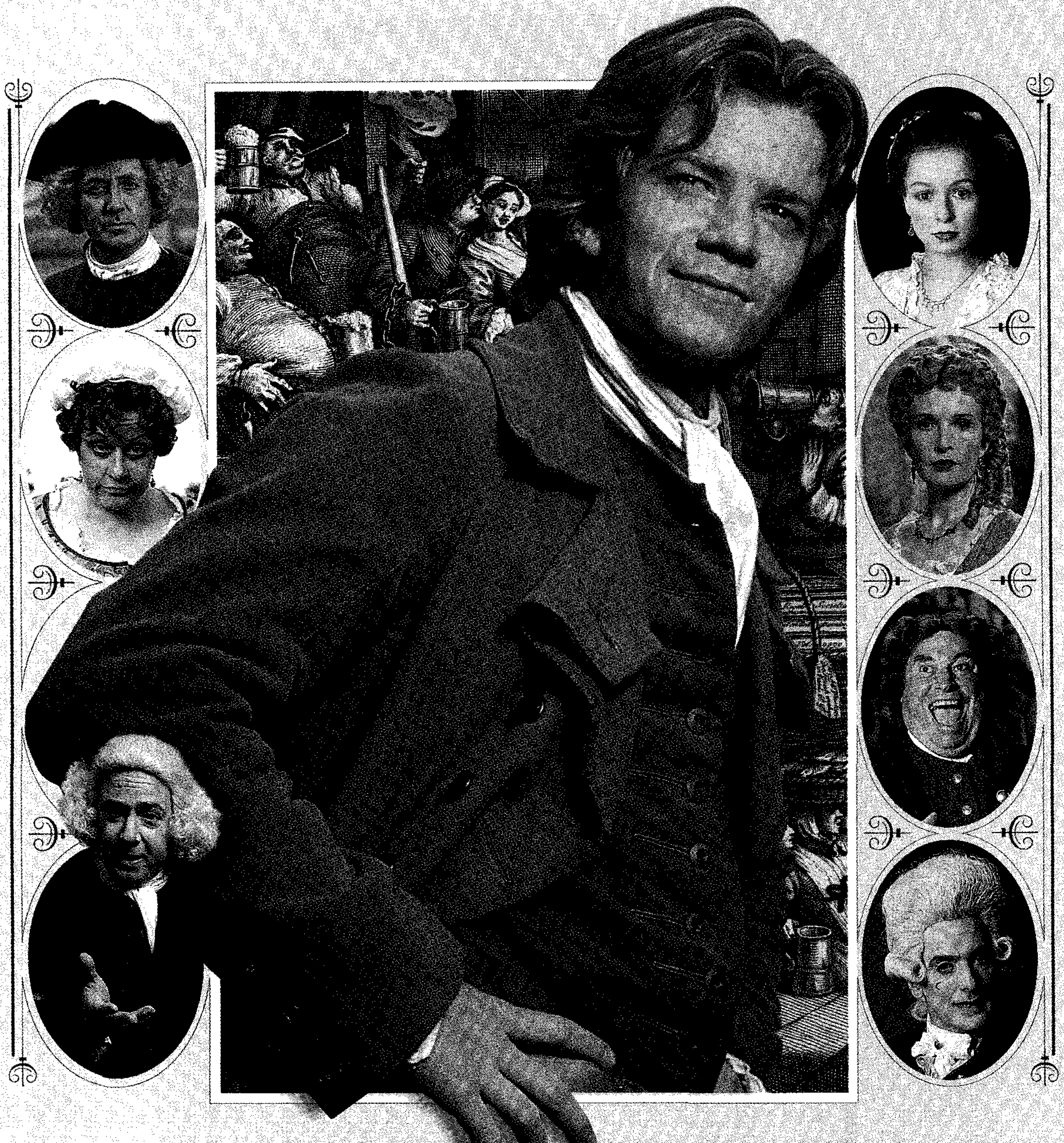

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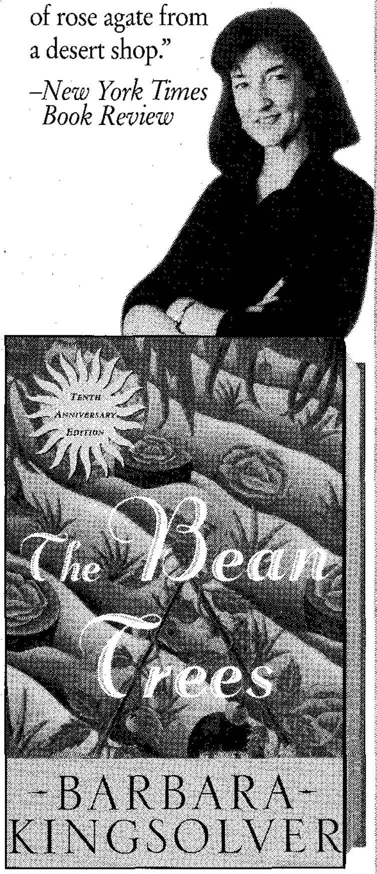

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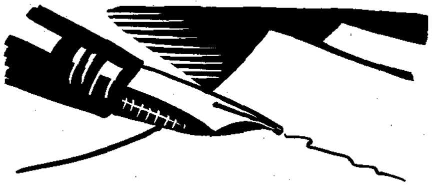

TRUST NO ONE

In "The End of Loyalty" (March 9th), Henry Louis Gates, Jr., observes that "the public regard for [loyalty] has waned." It's about time. The "natural context" of loyalty may be, as Gates writes, the reciprocity of "lords and vassals," but its derivative is the unflinching constancy of henchmen like Goebbels and Göring. The United States was born of well-founded disloyalty, and its founding documents require its governing officers to earn the citizens' trust. People with the courage and sense to denounce leaders whose actions don't deserve that trust shouldn't be labelled contumacious or self-serving.

KATHLEEN MURPHY
San Pedro, Calif.

Loyalty is no longer regarded as a virtue because it is in direct conflict with a healthy democracy. The foundation of a government that serves at the pleasure of the people is not loyalty but truth. Loyalty allows the concealment of injustice, abuses of power, and decadence, and dupes the voters about the people they elect. That a President's underlings no longer hesitate to condemn what they believe is wrong is a trend that can only bode well for the country, no matter how messy or inconvenient it is for the President.

SUSAN L. SELF
Los Angeles, Calif.

Ironically, it is loyalty to and affection for the psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg, my long-deceased friend and colleague, that leads me to protest Mr. Gates's understanding of Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Gates writes that people at the highest moral level, Stage Six, would act "in the name of abstract principle," which he takes to mean "letting their own dear mothers burn to a crisp with nary a second thought while they grandly escort some silk-bedizened cleric to safety." Kohlberg's Stage Six is best represented not by this absurd example but by that of the three American soldiers who, out of personal conviction, used their helicopter to shield Vietnamese civilians during the My Lai massacre.

EDGAR Z. FRIEDENBERG
Professor emeritus, Dalhousie University
Hubbards, Canada

The phenomenon of people no longer being loyal to their bosses or their corporations is engulfing our society because bosses and corporations are no longer loyal to their people. So "doing what's right" has now become "doing what's right for me," and people are choosing to save themselves, not the archbishop *or* their mother, from the burning building.

SALLIE MARS
Rye, N.Y.

MASTERLY MELODIES

Alex Ross's survey of film music ("Scoring for Oscar," March 9th) omitted what I consider the most interesting and innovative (and the most severely atonal) music ever written for the movies: the soundtracks of the great Warner Bros. cartoons of the nineteen-forties and fifties. The music complements the sinewy deviousness and capering anarchy of Bugs, Sylvester, and the others so well that these films are as much modernist masterpieces as "Merrie Melodies."

TIMOTHY KNAPMAN
Weybridge, England

RUNNING A TIGHT SHIP

The civility measures that Mayor Giuliani proposes for New Yorkers (Comment, by Louis Menand, March 9th) seem to be based on an old Navy adage: a ship's captain, upset over the low morale of his crew, orders that there will be no more shore leave until morale improves. But in the Navy everyone recognized this as a joke.

GERALD F. WEIGLE
Fairfax, Va.

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "The Mail," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. They can also be faxed to 212-840-8489 or sent via E-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.

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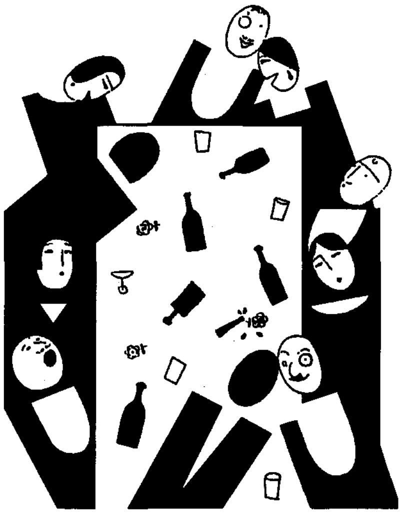
GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Anadarko—The MCC Theatre presents a drama set in an Oklahoma jail, by Tim Blake Nelson. Doug Hughes is the director. Opens April 1 at 7. (120 W. 28th St. 727-7765.)

The Chairs—From London, a Théâtre de Complicité/Royal Court Theatre production of Ionesco's tragic farce. Directed by Simon McBurney. Opens April 1 at 7. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Cripple of Inishmaan—Jerry Zaks directs a play by Martin McDonagh, in which an island community off the coast of Ireland is visited by a Hollywood producer. In previews through April 5. Opens April 7 at 8. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

Golden Child—David Henry Hwang's drama about a Chinese businessman struggling with the evolution of cultural traditions. James Lapine is the director. Two previews on April 1. Opens April 2 at 6:30. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

The Herbal Bed—Shakespeare's daughter is put on trial for adultery, in a drama by Peter Whelan. Michael Attenborough is the director. In previews. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

High Society—Melissa Errico and Daniel McDonald lead the cast in a new musical based on Philip Barry's play "The Philadelphia Story." The songs are by Cole Porter. The book is by Arthur Kopit. Christopher Renshaw is the director. In previews. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Honour—The life of a middle-aged poet (Jane Alexander) is turned upside down when a young journalist (Laura Linney) arrives to interview her writer husband (Robert Foxworth), in a drama by the Australian playwright Joanna Murray-Smith. Gerald Gutierrez is the director. Previews begin April 2. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

I Am My Own Cheap Thrill—It's a man's world, and Amanda Vogel has something to say about it in her one-woman show. Thursdays through Saturdays at 10:30. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

Saturn Returns: A Concert—The composer Adam Guettel and the director Tina Landau, who collaborated on the 1996 musical "Floyd Collins," have joined forces again for this song cycle. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

A View from the Bridge—The Roundabout Theatre's revival of Arthur Miller's tragic story of the longshoreman Eddie Carbone and his obsession with his orphaned niece reopens at the Neil Simon Theatre on April 3. (Reviewed in our issue of 1/5/98.) (250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

Wait Until Dark—Marisa Tomei portrays a blind woman and Quentin Tarantino a psychotic drug dealer, in a revival of Frederick Knott's 1966 suspense drama. Leonard Foglia is the director. In previews through April 4. Opens April 5 at 6:30. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Ah, Wilderness!—A Lincoln Center Theatre revival of Eugene O'Neill's comedy, set on Independence Day in 1906. (Vivian Beaumont. 239-6200.)

Amazing Grace—In this new drama by Michael Cristofer, Marsha Mason is eerily believable as an oblivious murderess who finds God on death row in North Carolina. What's hard to believe is that Cristofer thought it might be fresh to reheat the old Southern sinner-salvation-faith-healing-crucifixion stew that's so often served up in death-penalty dramas. The talented cast makes do. (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200.)

Art—Yasmina Reza's farce is a splendid vehicle for three masterly actors, Victor Garber, Alan Alda, and Alfred Molina. They portray friends whose fifteen-year relationship is threatened when one of them buys a large white canvas for two hundred thousand francs. Elegantly translated, from the French, by Christopher Hampton. Directed by Matthew Warchus. (3/23/98) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Beauty Queen of Leenane—The precocious Anglo-Irish playwright Martin McDonagh's riveting winter's tale, set in a rural Irish cottage, about an aged mother (the stolid and sensational Anna Manahan) and her virgin forty-year-old daughter (the pale and poignant Marie Mullen), who is trapped in a punishing solitude. It's a simple, primitive story, yet it is filled with complex emotional surprises and reversals. (3/16/98) (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200. The play closes here on April 5. It moves to Broadway's Walter Kerr on April 14.)

Benita Canova—Richard Foreman's latest concoction, a lush exploration of erotic violence. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650. Closes April 5.)

Blithedale: A Virtual Utopia—Tim Maner's final work in a trilogy of plays based on Hawthorne. Wednesdays through Sundays at 8. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

Cabaret—A Roundabout Theatre revival of the 1966 Kander and Ebb musical. Sam Mendes is the director. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Kit Kat Klub, 124 W. 43rd St. 719-1300.)

The Deep Blue Sea—Blythe Danner and Edward Herrmann star in a revival of Terence Rattigan's 1952 drama. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)

The Diary of Anne Frank—Theatrically, this reworking of the 1955 play by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, under the direction of James Lapine, is generally fine. But the play's dogged realism is its fundamental flaw: we can't really re-create for ourselves what her dreadful situation was like. (12/15/97) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

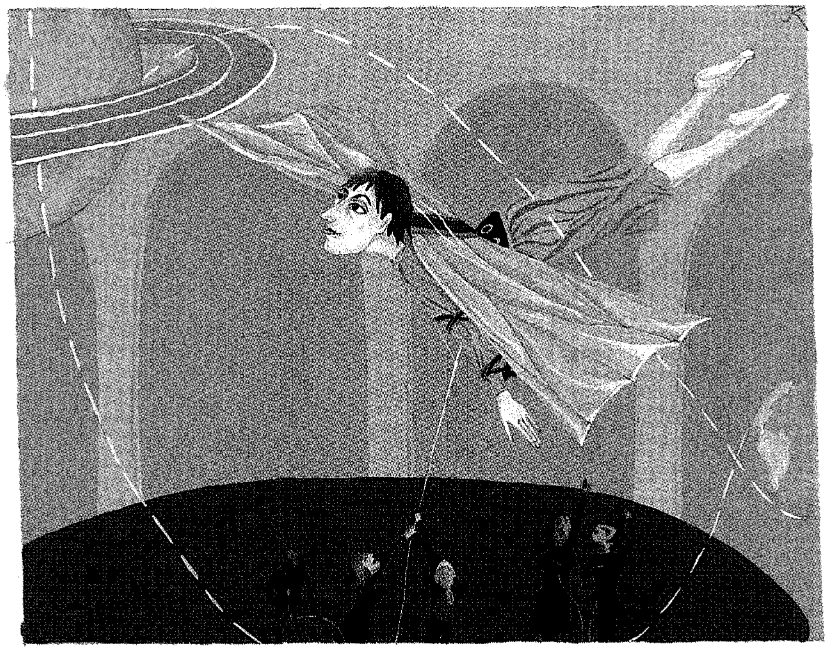
Dinah Was—Oliver Goldstick's play about the late singer Dinah Washington (Yvette Freeman) trots out every blues-queen cliché in the book, and knowing that Washington helped create the clichés doesn't make things any better. But never mind: Freeman's powerful performance and evocative singing, and the general high spirits, make this a memorable evening. Directed by David Petrarca. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

Dress to Kill—The British comic Eddie Izzard returns to town with a new show. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391.)

The Emperor Jones—The Wooster Group's staging of O'Neill's early drama. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 966-3651. Closes April 26.)

Eyes for Consuela—Sam Shepard's new play, which stars David Strathairn, is an adaptation of Octavio Paz's 1976 short story "The Blue Bouquet." (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes April 5.)

A Flea in Her Ear—Bill Irwin's production of Georges Feydeau's 1907 farce can't live up to the fun of the script, which has been deftly and wittily co-adapted by Jean-Marie Besset and Mark O'Donnell. Part of the



"Saturn Returns," a song cycle by Adam Guettel, at the Public Theatre.

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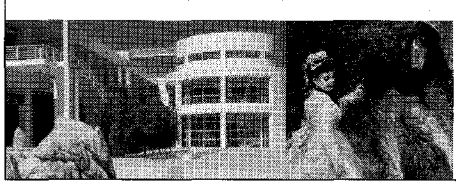

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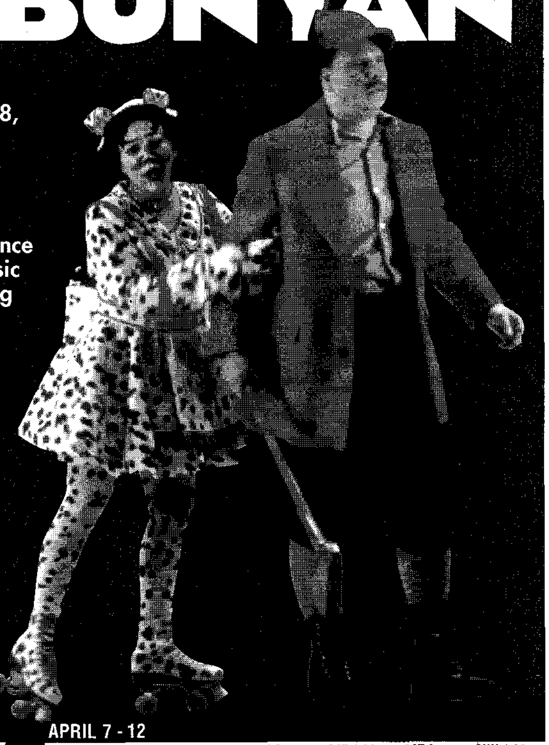

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problem is the casting: the ensemble is quite young, and as a group the actors lack both the years and the swank necessary to carry off the vainglory for which the author punishes them. (3/23/98) (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)

Forever Tango—This stepchild of Vegas and Buenos Aires gets everything right. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200. The show closes here April 5. It moves to the Marquis on April 15.)

Freak—In his "pseudo-autobiographical" one-man show about growing up in New York, John Leguizamo takes the audience on a very funny breakneck jaunt down distorted-memory lane, beginning with the moment his parents conceived him, in Colombia. ("We left during that great plantain famine of the late sixties," he says.) He's a small guy, but his seemingly boneless body and boundless humor fill the large stage, and he absolutely charms, from start to finish. Directed by David Bar Katz. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Good Will—Jane Smiley's novella is the basis of this new play by Joan Rater and Tony Phelan. (Theatre 3, at 311 W. 43rd St. 246-5877. Closes April 4.)

Happy Days—Ruth Maleczech and Tom Fitzpatrick star in a Mabou Mines production of Beckett's 1961 play. (Toronado, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 473-1991. Closes April 5.)

Hedwig and the Angry Inch—Hedwig, as written and portrayed by John Cameron Mitchell, is a sweet transsexual singer from East Berlin, whose cabaret performance cum stadium act becomes a smart, funny, and very moving exploration of the redemptive, if perhaps fleeting, power of love. (Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)

Hot Klezmer—A celebration of wedding music of the shtetl. (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797.)

I Don't Know Who He Was and I Don't Know What He Said—The playwright Mac Wellman directs his one-man monologue—a rant by a Wall Street flimflam man—performed by Matthew Maguire. Fridays and Saturdays at 10. (Dixon Place, 258 Bowery, near Houston St. 219-3088.)

Jails, Hospitals & Hip-Hop—Danny Hoch returns to P.S. 122 with a new solo show. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

Joseph Gabriel Magic '98—Mr. Gabriel comes to New York by way of Las Vegas. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Laguna Beach—A late-night comic soap opera, written by David Latham and performed by a cast of downtown types. Saturdays at midnight. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

The Lion King—The director Julie Taymor's theatrical event is far more textured and original than the animated film; it's like being in a dream awake. The show's high visual style, however, is in sharp contrast to its low verbal one. (11/24/97) (New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

Long Day's Journey Into Night—An Irish Rep staging of O'Neill's drama. With Frances Sternhagen and Brian Murray. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

Marc Salem's Mindgames—The clairvoyant's fascinating "tricks" seem like magic, and at times you feel like you're the only person in the audience who isn't a plant. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

Mizlansky/Zilinsky; or, Schmucks—Davis Mizlansky, played with terrific gusto by Nathan Lane, is a has-been producer trying to float one last get-rich scheme—the sale of a dubious tax shelter—with his urbane partner and erstwhile best friend, Sam Zilinsky (the droll Lewis J. Stadlen), whom he woos, hilariously, into the disastrous scam. Jon Robin Baitz based this high-spirited comedy on his experiences working as a gofer for a two-bit producer in the mid-eighties. Aided by Joe Mantello's elegant direction, he creates a potent atmosphere of affection and regret which is the play's charm. (3/16/98) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes April 4.)

Much Ado About Nothing—The British troupe Cheek by Jowl touches down in Brooklyn to present Shakespeare's comedy. Continues through April 5. (BAM's Majestic Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

The Mystery of the Rose Bouquet—A psychological thriller by Manuel Puig, presented by INTAR. (420 W. 42nd St. 695-6135. Closes April 12.)

Mystery School—Tyne Daly stars in Paul Selig's new one-woman play, a collection of monologues by five characters in various states of spiritual fulfillment, ranging from an unwavering Christian fundamentalist to an alcoholic desperately seeking something to believe in. Though the idea has the potential to be deadly earnest, the show is, for the most part, funny and thought-provoking; Ms. Daly and Mr. Selig create a group of recognizable characters, whose seemingly disparate insights (and lack thereof) turn out to be complementary. Staged in a decrepit synagogue that makes an ideal backdrop, especially as lighted by Michael Chybowski. Smoothly directed by Doug Hughes. (Angel Orensanz Foundation Center for the Arts, 172 Norfolk St., at E. Houston St. 239-6200.)

KAREN CALDICOTT

Never the Sinner—John Logan's 1985 play about Leopold and Loeb sweeps the audience into the boys' twisted friendship without losing sight of the sheer brutality of their "crime of the century"—a balancing act that Mr. Logan and the director, Ethan McSweeny, bring off seamlessly. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

The Old Neighborhood—David Mamet's three elegant, autobiographical one-act plays are serious, beautiful, and short—an almost impossible feat these days on Broadway. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Ragtime—E. L. Doctorow's epic novel is transformed into a historical pageant. It's a big, brave, passionate gamble, masterfully directed by Frank Galati. (2/2/98) (Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

R & J—A promising, if not exactly new, idea—schoolboys escape regimentation and discover their own passion by performing "Romeo and Juliet"—yields a few gripping moments surrounded by a lot of overheated panting, shouting, and foot-stomping. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 354-2220.)

Richard II and **Richard III**—The director Ron Daniels has made a thematic mess of two of Shakespeare's most politically astute—and darkly funny—plays. But Christopher McCann's Richard III is frighteningly seductive, and Neil Patel's versatile sets, along with Donald Holder's lighting effects, create an appropriately moody ambience. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200. Closes April 5.)

St. Nicholas—Brian Cox portrays a drama critic having a breakdown, in Conor McPherson's 1997 play. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

The Scarlet Pimpernel—This new musical, based on the Baroness Orczy novel, has a lot going for it (if you don't count the music and lyrics, which are dreadful): its charismatic star, Douglas Sills, Andrew Jackness's sets, and Jane Greenwood's costumes. Peter Hunt directed. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

Secrets Every Smart Traveler Should Know—In this revue inspired by a Fodor's travel guide, the best songs are the ones that manage to be goofy and savvy at the same time. The show hits turbulence, though, when the humor trades on international stereotypes. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

Shopping and Fucking—A small, sketchy piece of British boulevard nihilism, by the first-time playwright Mark Ravenhill, which attempts to dramatize capitalism's warping effects. (2/16/98) (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475. Closes April 11.)

Side Man—Warren Leight's new play is a nostalgic but never sappy paean to the musical obsessiveness and worldly indifference of mid-century big-band musicians. Though it gives short shrift to the characters, the play invites the audience into the musicians' world, and the cast is good enough to make it come alive. Solidly directed by Michael Mayer. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 279-4200. Closes April 12.)

The Sound of Music—The hills are alive again. Rebecca Luker is Maria. Susan H. Schulman is the director. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Sunshine Boys—A revival of Neil Simon's comedy about two irascible old vaudevillians, starring Ye Olde Odd Couple of television, Tony Randall and Jack Klugman. The sandpapery friction that the twosome showed on TV is now reduced to lovability. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

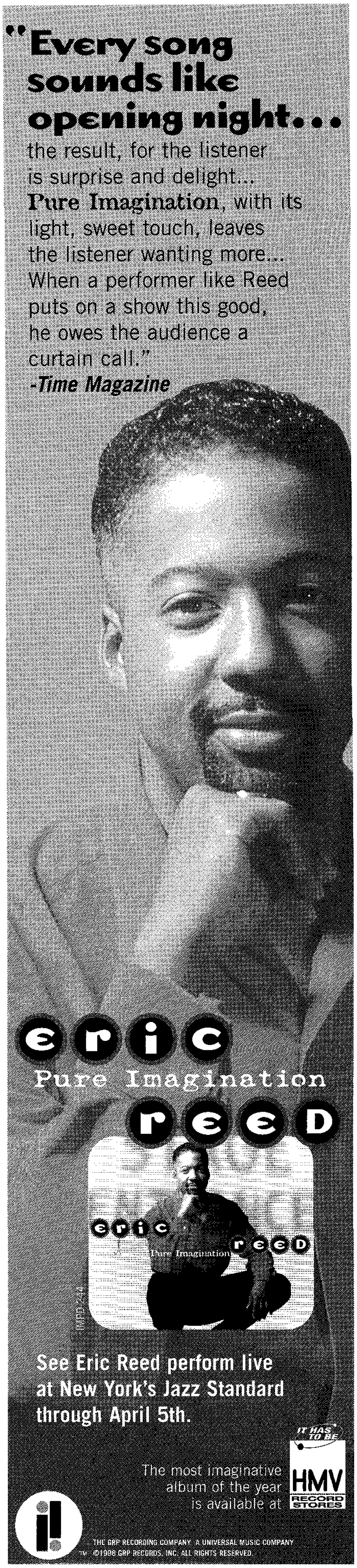
Two Pianos, Four Hands—With the Canadian keyboardists Ted Dykstra and Richard Greenblatt. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

Upstate—Jonathan Slaff portrays a playwright who retreats to the country to complete a children's play, in a comedy by Crystal Field. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 254-1109. Closes April 12.)

Visiting Mr. Green—Eli Wallach finds great dignity in the title character, an eighty-six-year-old Jewish widower, in Jeff Baron's sweet if predictable Upper West Side comedy. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-0700.)

LONG RUNS

AS BEES IN HONEY DROWN: Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY STRIKES BACK!:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GROSS INDECENCY: THE THREE TRIALS OF OSCAR WILDE:** Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000. . . . **HOWARD CRABTREE'S WHEN PIGS FLY:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE:** Century, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LAST NIGHT OF BALLYHOO:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **LATE NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 279-4200. . . . **THE LIFE:** Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy,1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **1776:** Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **TITANIC:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 239-6200.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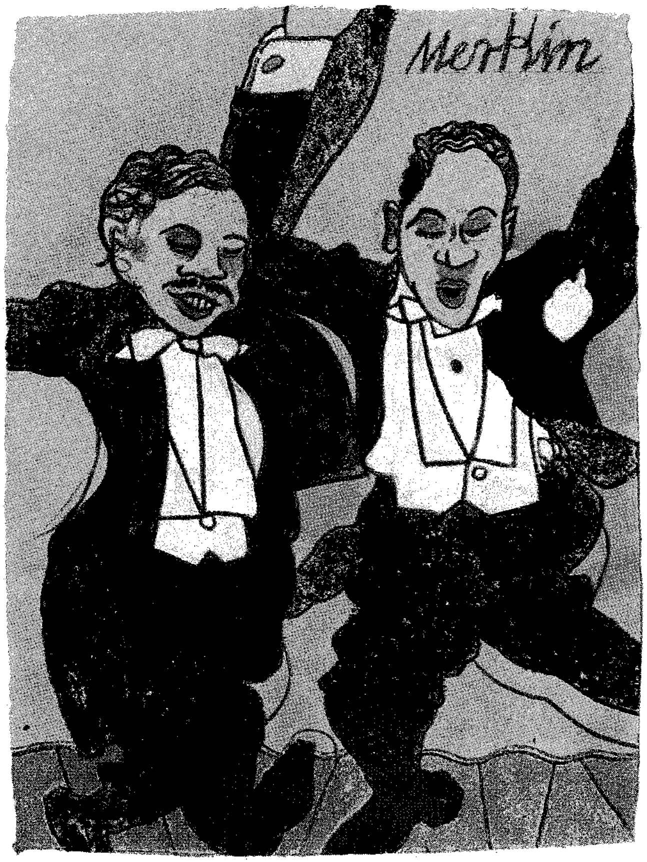
DANCE

"From Harlem to Hollywood"—Jimmy Slide, Savion Glover, Gregory Hines, and Lena Horne join other hoofers, poets, singers, and musicians in a tribute to the Nicholas Brothers (Fayard and Harold), the Philadelphia-bred tap-dance team who appeared in dozens of films in the thirties and forties ("Kid Millions," "Tin Pan Alley," "Sun Valley Serenade," etc.). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 6 at 8.)



"From Harlem to Hollywood," a tribute to the Nicholas Brothers (Harold and Fayard), at Carnegie Hall.

Eliot Feld's Ballet Tech—April 1, April 4, and April 7 at 8: "Simon Sez," "Charmed Lives," "Re: X," and "The Jig Is Up." . . . ¶ April 2-3 at 8: "Doo Dah Day," "Echo," "Yo, Johann," and "Paper Tiger." . . . ¶ April 4-5 at 2 (the family matinées): "Hello Fancy," "Half Time," "Evening Chant," and "The Jig Is Up." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through April 26.)

"Luck"—Dance by Neil Greenberg presents the complete cycle of the diaristic series that began in 1994 with "Not-About-AIDS-Dance." March 31-April 1 and April 4-5 at 8: The final part of the trilogy is itself a trilogy, and includes sections titled "My Fair Lady," "Judy Garland," and the première of "Luck". . . . ¶ April 2 at 8 and April 5 at 3: "Not-About-AIDS-Dance" and "The Disco Project." (92nd Street Y Harkness Dance Project, Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 996-1100.)

Dance Theatre Workshop—April 1 and April 3 at 8 and April 5 at 3: Victoria Marks presents solos and collaborations, including "Father/Daughter Story," featuring actual father-daughter duets, and a dance film, "Men," with choreography (augmented by reminiscence) performed by elderly men. . . . ¶ April 2 and April 4 at 8: Dan Froot appears in "Froot Alone," a suite of solos in which, more often than not, he accompanies himself on the saxophone. (219 W. 19th St. 924-0077.)

Martha at Mother—The monthly performance series hosted by Richard Move (in the guise of Martha Graham) convenes on the seventh anniversary of the legendary modern dancer's death. Rob Besserer, Keely Garfield, Deborah Jowitt, Jennifer Monson, and Foofwah d'Immobilité (the former Frederic Gafner), among others, contribute works appropriate to the occasion. (Mother, 875 Washington St. 642-5005. April 1 at 8 and 10 and April 2 at 9.)

"After Eros"—As a child, Maureen Fleming invented a slow and sinuous form of movement as an instinctive reaction to a nearly crippling accident in Japan. Her present-day elaborations of those movements have brought her back to Japan to study its Butoh traditions. In her current work, the choreographer expands last year's mesmerizingly slow-motion solo (created in collaboration with Philip Glass and David Henry Hwang) into a work for twelve dancers. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. April 2-5 at 8.)

Dance & Film—Filmmaker Alain Le Razer and choreographer Lorn MacDougal present repertory (including "When Birds Are Singing at 3 A.M.") and new film-and-dance works. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 274-9477. April 3-4 at 8 and April 5 at 5.)

Rachel Thorne Germond—The choreographer makes pleasurable mismatches in such works as "Dish-ette" (where two women recite Gertrude Stein's aesthetic theory while doing backup dance to "Mr. Big Stuff") and "3 Elvises" (a trio for three women got up as the King). (Merce Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. 924-0077. April 3 at 9 and April 4-5 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Steve Miller Band—The space cowboy—a walking definition of "classic rock." (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. April 1 at 8.)

Phish—Vermont's favorite laid-back, jam-happy combo. (Nassau Coliseum. 516-794-9300. April 2-3 at 7:30.)

"Doc Cheatham Remembered"—Cheatham kept on blowing right until it was time to go—a jazzman's dream. When the trumpeter and singer died last year, at age ninety-two, he was riding a resurgence of interest that found him playing with more emotional vigor and conviction than ever. Some of New York's most distinguished neo-swing players, including trumpeter Randy Sandke, reedman Ken Peplowski, trombonist Wycliffe Gordon, and guitarist Howard Alden, turn out to celebrate the grand old man's fortitude and enduring spirit. Trombonist Bill Watrous, pianist Butch Thompson, and members of Cheatham's last band will also be on hand. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. April 2 at 8.)

Larry Goldings—No one is going to confuse Goldings with Jimmy Smith, or even with Baby Face Willette, for that matter, but he has enough funk in his fingers to convince you that the electric organ can be a witty, pungent instrument. (New School Jazz Performance Space, 55 W. 13th St. April 3 at 6:30. Tickets at the door.)

The Reverend Horton Heat—Crazy, industrial-strength rockabilly. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. April 3 at 7:30.)

Pat Martino—For someone whose career was nearly ended in 1980 by a brain aneurysm, Martino has bounced back miraculously. His iconic stature now secure, this sleek and thoughtful guitarist has refined the hard-earned knowledge and experience of four decades into a signature poetic sound. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. April 3 at 8.)

Gary Lucas—The much-in-demand downtown guitarist (he's played with Leonard Bernstein, Captain Beefheart, Jeff Buckley, and Joan Osborne) offers an evening of his own compositions, plus works by Wagner and Sun Ra. Kindred spirit John Zorn sits in. (Roulette, 228 West Broadway. 219-8242. April 3 at 9.)

B. B. King, Millie Jackson, and Bobby (Blue) Bland—A blues-and-soul master class. (Apollo Theatre, 253 W. 125th St. 864-0372. April 4 at 7 and 11. . . . ¶ Westbury Music Fair. 516-334-0800. April 5 at 3 and 7.)

Mary J. Blige—Blige may sell fewer records than Janet Jackson, she may lack the creative oomph of Missy Elliott, but she remains R. & B.'s dominant diva, an emotive singer of heavyweight strength, with a voice as big as her entourage. Sharing the bill is the oleaginous funk of matinée upstart Usher. (Theatre at Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. April 4 at 8.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—April 1: **Greg Tardy,** another ardent and rapidly maturing tenor saxophonist, heard to fine effect recently with trumpeter Tom Harrell, both live and on disk. April 3-4: **Dave Stryker.** On last year's album, "Blue to the Bone," guitarist Stryker pulled a roots number, basking in the comfort of the I-IV-V progression. It's practically impossible for a bop-based player—particularly a rapid-wrist guitarist—not to profit from a long, cool drink at the wellspring of jazz. Dining.

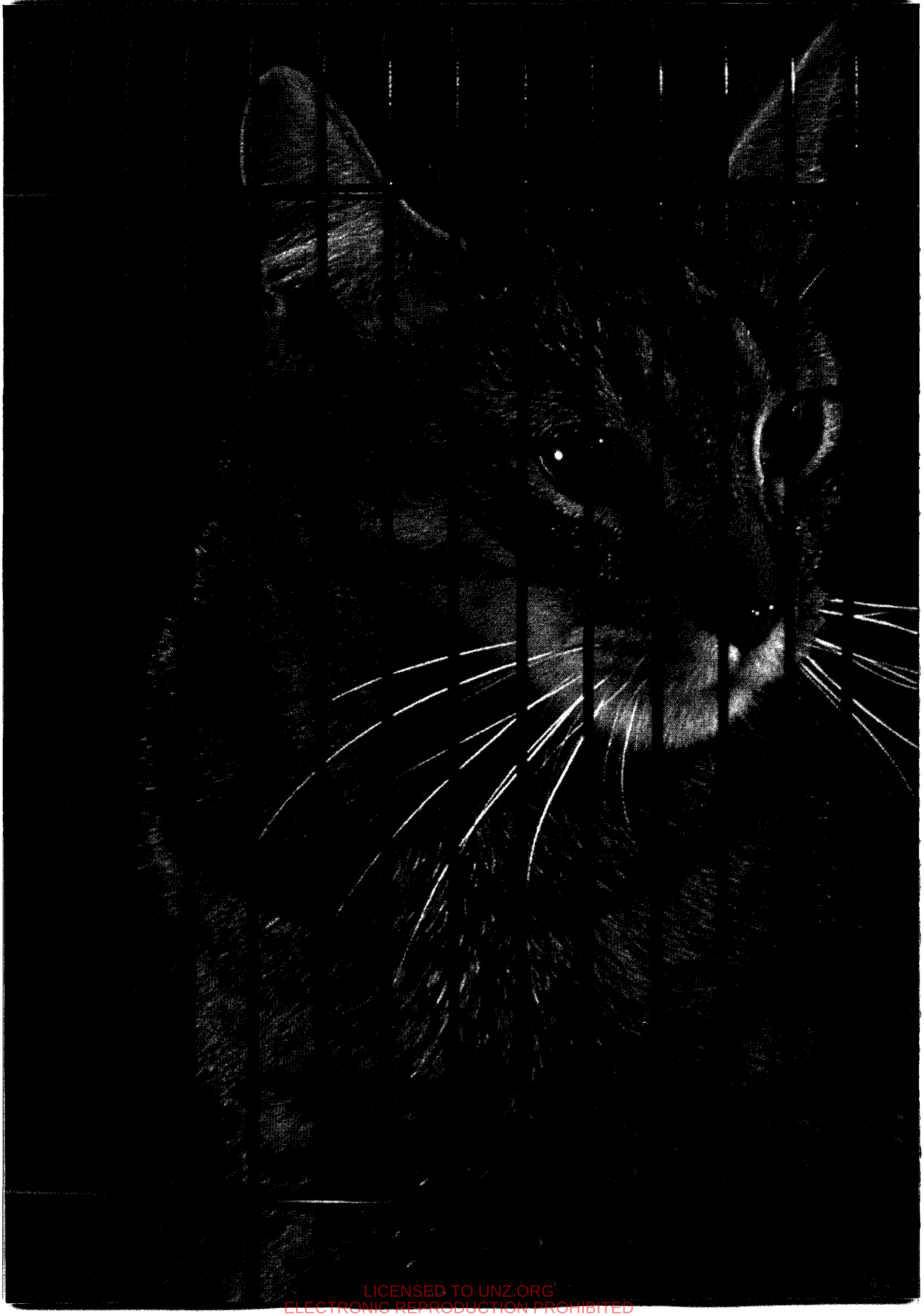
Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—The **Clark Terry** quintet and the **Marcus Roberts** trio are in through April 5. The brassman Terry needs both trumpet and flugelhorn to accommodate the torrent of notes that is always at the ready; the overflow gets handled by a spew of delightful vocal gibberish. Pianist Roberts always has one foot in the past: James P. Johnson, Thelonious Monk, Gershwin, Ellington—no early master escapes his interest. Dining.

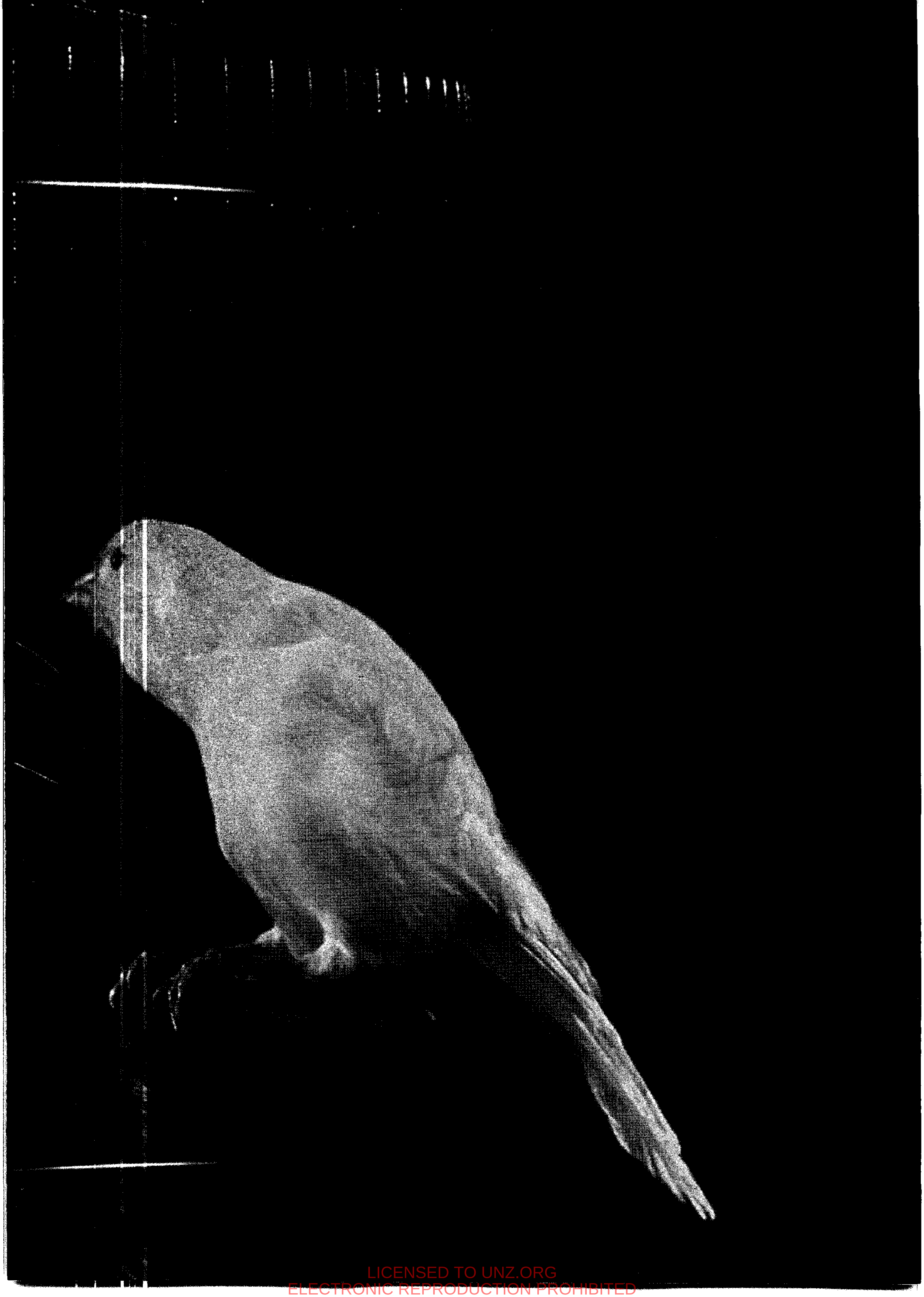
Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—As always, **Barbara Cook's** annual April engagement heralds the true start of spring. . . . ¶ On Mondays, **Woody Allen** plays with the **Eddy Davis New Orleans Jazz Band.** . . . ¶ Across the hall, pianist **Peter Mintun** is in charge at Bemelmans Bar.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through April 5: The **Stanley Turrentine** quartet. You judge a tenor saxophonist like Turrentine not by his virtuosity or his invention but by his sound—in this case, a huge, rounded calling card of warm, gritty soul. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** Dining.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—April 1-5: The exceptional saxophonist, clarinettist, and flute player **Marty Ehrlich** is calling his latest quartet Travellers Tales in honor of his landmark 1990 recording

RICHARD MERKIN





fantasy is just another word
for fearless

the key to creativity is thinking
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of the same name. Working alongside another saxophonist, a bassist, and a drummer gives Ehrlich the room to play freewheeling, post-Ornette Coleman improvisations against his own finely crafted compositions and sure, formal conceits. He and drummer Bobby Previte mesh like brilliant musical siblings, intuiting each other's moves and throwing blind jabs; Tony Malabe mans the second horn, while Jerome Harris handles the bass.

Michael's Pub at Bill's Gay Nineties, 57 E. 54th St. (758-2272)—**JULIE WILSON,** the doyenne of New York's chanteuses, has decided to settle in for a permanent, or at least open-ended, residence at this upstairs club room. For the time being, she's crafting her show as a tribute to the legendary showman Florenz Ziegfeld.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—The great cabaret in the sky. Singer and raconteur **MICHAEL FEINSTEIN** begins a monthlong run.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—The assured jazz vocalist **CARMEN LUNDY** is in through April 5. Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—**JAVON JACKSON** (here through April 12) is no fool. With so many bright young tenor saxophonists around, he has ditched the conventional horn-and-rhythm setup on his most recent recordings and gone outré. Collaborating with Craig Street, the jazz producer of the minute, he experiments with organ, vocalists, and both acoustic and rock-ish guitars, tackling material by composers from Muddy Waters and Serge Gainsbourg to Tony Williams and Carlos Santana. Onstage, Jackson may not be able to replicate all the sonic high jinks of his disks, but his band is certain to keep things lively. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

ROCK, ETC.

Acme Underground, 9 Great Jones St. (677-6963)—America's answer to Elvis Costello, gravel-voiced troubadour **MARK EITZEL** (April 1) has written enough bloodshot tableaux vivants to line the walls of a small museum. Since the breakup of his band—the unjustly neglected American Music Club—he's issued a series of smoky, spotty solo albums; the latest, "Caught in a Trap and I Can't Back Out 'Cause I Love You Too Much, Baby," is a return to the stripped-down confessional mode Eitzel's most comfortable with—one from which he's too often strayed in the past. With **SUE GARNER,** bassist and singer for the great alt-pop band Run On, who arrives with some songs from her first solo effort, "To Run More Smoothly."

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—April 1: The legendary blues-rock guitarist **JOHNNY WINTER.** April 3: Back in the late sixties, the celebrated British folk-rock unit **FAIRPORT CONVENTION** hatched the careers of Richard Thompson and Sandy Denny, among others. With founding member Simon Nicol still manning the band's rudder, they sound as rowdy and randy as ever. April 4: **DAN BERN,** an up-and-coming alternafolkie with a sharp sarcastic bent.

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—April 1: New York avant-pop favorites **BABE THE BLUE OX.** April 2: John Flansburgh (They Might Be Giants) and his side trio, **MONO PUFF.**

Pink Pony, 176 Ludlow St. (253-1922)—April 3: If the reward for bookishness were bookings, **FRANKLIN BRUNO** (who moonlights as a philosophy grad student) would be playing Giants Stadium. Bruno's emotionally nuanced pop songs are more than just precocious; he's as good at giving real weight to simple refrains ("Hold me like you mean it") as he is at tossing off saucy one-liners ("then I determined your French kiss was German").

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—April 2: **BASEMENT BHANGRA,** an evening of ecstatic, futuristic dance music which fuses an ancient Punjabi harvest festival with the technological wonders of underground London. The d.j.s Rekkha and Joy spice the infectious *dohl* drumbeat with pinches of classical raga, old-school hip-hop, dub reggae, and the occasional Malcolm X outburst or car crash. The frenetic but friendly dance floor is awhirl with turbans and saris, and Indian film clips are projected as a backdrop. This monthly party makes your average world-music event seem as bland as Esperanto. April 3: The high-spirited funk, rock, and soul trio the **FAMILY STAND.** April 6: The grand old man of salsa, **TITO PUENTE.** Dining.

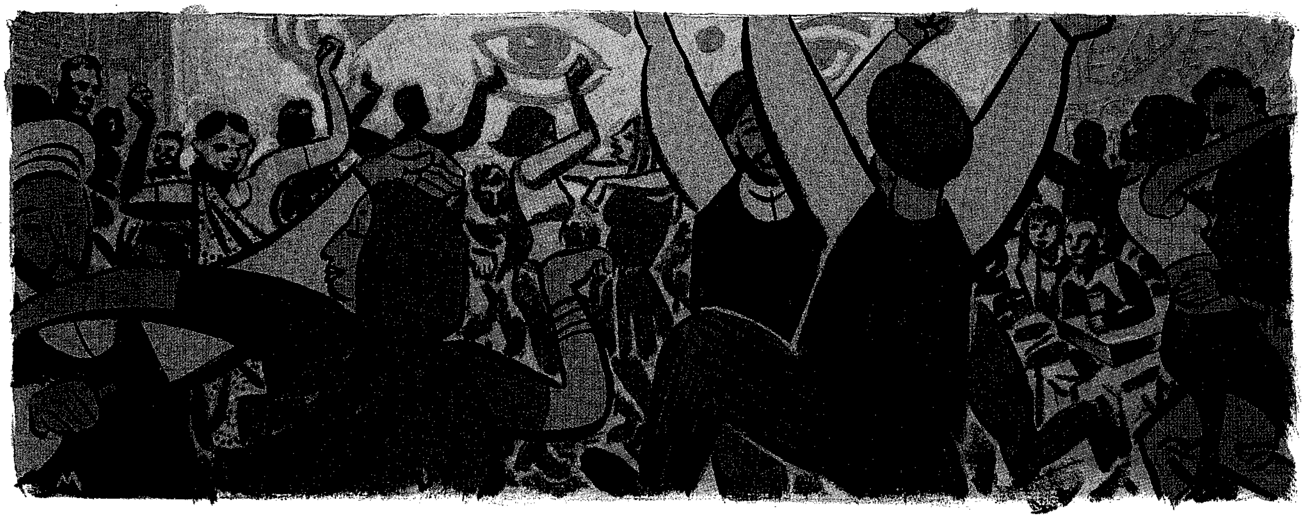
Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—April 1: One of the few country bands with a fervent rock-and-roll following, the **MAVERICKS** make elegant prairie pop that owes more to the crisp harmonies of the Everly Brothers than to the glitz of contemporary Nashville. April 3: **NILE RODGERS AND CHIC.** Is he the world's greatest living rhythm guitarist or just the man who made Madonna? Long before Rodgers produced "Like a Virgin," the Material Girl's breakthrough album (a job earned on the strength of his knob-twirling for David Bowie's "Let's Dance"), he was the guitarist and songwriter for Chic, the sleek, late-seventies disco cabal that gave the world such seminal dance-floor candy as "Le Freak" and "Good Times." Sadly, Rodgers's partner, bassist Bernard Edwards (who also scored as a producer for the eighties supergroup the Power Station), died a few years ago. The bottom end may be gone, but the groove continues. April 4: Up from Raleigh, North Carolina, **WHISKEYTOWN** spins out twangy, lovelorn alt-country. April 5: Belfast punk heroes **STIFF LITTLE FINGERS.**

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"Augustin Pajou, Royal Sculptor." Pajou (1730-1809) was one of the stars of the waning ancien régime, but today he's almost entirely unknown. This exhibition should go some way toward rectifying that neglect. His works seem to display both the spirit of the rococo and that of the neoclassicism that was ascendant in the late eighteenth century. Perhaps the most accessible works for contemporary viewers are Pajou's portrait busts, which even at their most formal never lose the vivid sense of the subject's personality. Through May 24. . . . ¶ Pierre-Paul Prud'hon (1758-1823) never achieved the fame of the leading neoclassical painter of his day, Jacques-Louis David, but oddly enough he remained popular during the Romantic period, while the greater artist fell out of fashion. This exhibition of paintings and works on paper is exemplary in that it brings an underappreciated artist to contemporary attention without glossing over his deficiencies. Many of the pictures here are awkward and unconvincing—in a word, academic. However, a few stand out as brilliant, for example, "Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime" (1808), perhaps Prud'hon's masterpiece; some of the portraits; and the drawings of nudes, which have always been prized by connoisseurs. Through June 7. . . . ¶ "When Silk Was Gold: Central Asian and Chinese Textiles in the Metropolitan and Cleveland Museums of Art." Through May 17. . . . ¶ "Paul Strand Circa 1916." Through May 31. . . . ¶ "The Nature of Islamic Ornament, Part One: Calligraphy." Through June 28. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—For an artist whose roots are in sixties and seventies Conceptualism, Chuck Close enjoys unusually wide popularity. The early black-and-white blowup portraits of friends in the downtown art scene—none flattering, all overwhelming—are not easy to look at, which attests to their strength. The later works—more portraits of friends famous and obscure—are characterized by modular blobs of intense color, which give them a trippy, psychedelic splendor. Through May 26. . . . ¶ "Artists and Subjects: Picasso to Stella" examines the guises of twentieth-century portraiture. Through May 25. . . . ¶ "Alvar Aalto: Between Humanism and Materialism," a centennial exhibition that includes sketches, photographs, and maquettes of architectural projects by the Finnish modernist. Through May 19. . . . ¶ A retrospective of the works of Fernand Léger follows the metamorphoses



Sights and sounds of the subcontinent: Basement Bhangra, a monthly dance party at S.O.B.'s.

DAVID MAZZUCCHELLI

of the French painter (1881-1955), from Fauvist to Cubist to Social Realist. Through May 12. . . . ¶ Twenty-six recently acquired photographs by Garry Winogrand are on view. Through May 31. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 6; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"China: 5,000 Years" is an impressive survey of art in nearly every medium; it includes some of the country's greatest masterpieces. The exhibition ranges from the Neolithic to the dynastic era and has no particular focus; with works of this quality, however, no one's complaining. Through June 3. . . . ¶ "After 'Mountains and Sea': Frankenthaler 1956-59." Through May 3. . . . ¶ "Visions of Paris: Robert Delaunay's Series." Through May 24. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway, at Prince St. (423-3500)—"A Century in Crisis" comprises the contemporary portion of the institution's blockbuster exhibition "China: 5,000 Years." Chinese art in the past century has been invaded by Western influences, but typically the styles are picked up decades after they've been abandoned in Europe and America. Although some of the work has considerable graphic power, much of it is problematic. Through May 25. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The current Bill Viola retrospective is quite a feat of installation, given that much of this pioneer video artist's work incorporates sound and image in complex, quasi-sculptural settings. Viola's work is often very noisy: keeping the experience of various pieces separate is difficult, and at times the show becomes an auditory mishmash. This isn't necessarily a fault, since assaulting the senses is part of his program. Through May 10. . . . ¶ "Arthur Dove: A Retrospective," the first major exhibition in more than twenty years to examine the work of the Empire State abstractionist. Through April 12. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—"The Nature of Diamonds" looks at many facets of the adamantine stone, from its birth in volcanic fissures to its eventual rise to the heads of heads of state (e.g., on the crown of Peter the Great, displayed in the exhibition's walk-in diamond vault). Through April 26. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Jewels of the Romanovs: Treasures of the Russian Imperial Court" presents crown jewels and other baubles, including the most famous sapphire in the world (before Kate Winslet's), a 260-carat specimen given by Alexander II to his wife. Through July 5. . . . ¶ "Masters of Color and Light: Homer, Sargent, and the American Watercolor Movement" showcases more than a hundred and fifty works from the museum's extensive collection. Through July 5. . . . ¶ "Scattered Petals, Fallen Leaves, Shards of Glass: The Work of Bing Hu." Through May 10. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays, 11 to 9; and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Museo del Barrio, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (831-7272)—"Taíno: Pre-Columbian Art and Culture from the Caribbean" is a fascinating anthropological portrait of the sophisticated, very strange people that Columbus encountered when he arrived in the New World. An array of curved spatulas with skull-and-serpent heads, skillfully carved in stone, bone, and wood, turn out to be ritual vomiting sticks: Taíno shamans shoved these things down their throats to purify themselves before they took *cohoba*, a psychedelic substance that makes the world appear upside down. Among the other bizarre objects on display are some enigmatic stone sculptures known as three-pointers—pyramidal stone carvings that combine human, animal, and abstract motifs, which have been variously interpreted as representing mountains, volcanoes, breasts, manioc roots, and phalluses. Through May 3. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5.)

National Academy Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (369-4880)—What other institution in New York could present something titled "173rd Annual Exhibition"? This year's juried show ranges from work by well-established artists—a precisely observed pointillist "Meadow" by Andrew Forge, a nice nude pencil sketch by Paul Cadmus, a pristine still-life by William Bailey (indistinguishable from what he was doing twenty-five years ago)—to old-fashioned figurative painting, some of it charming and a lot of it dreary. There's an unwonted foray into conceptual minimalism: Thedra Cullar-Ledford's monumental cube of "Five Thousand Trashy Romance Novels," topped by a graphite-coated concrete slab. Other standouts include a luminous nocturne of a Manhattan apartment building, by Yvonne Jacquette, and a gay-themed gym scene by Patrick Webb, called "Punchinello Works Out: Vanquished." Through April 26. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5, and Friday evenings until 10.)

"Portrait" (1931), by Florence Henri, in an auction of the Verneuil collection, at Phillips.

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Theresa Bernstein—A retrospective of oils and drawings by the hundred-and-eight-year-old realist, one of the youngest painters of the Ashcan school, which flourished in the early part of this century. One spectacular canvas depicts a New Jersey crowd, during the First World War, watching the searchlights playing on the city sky and across the Hudson, looking for German dirigibles and U-boats. Through April 18. (Whalen, 24 W. 57th St. 397-9700.)

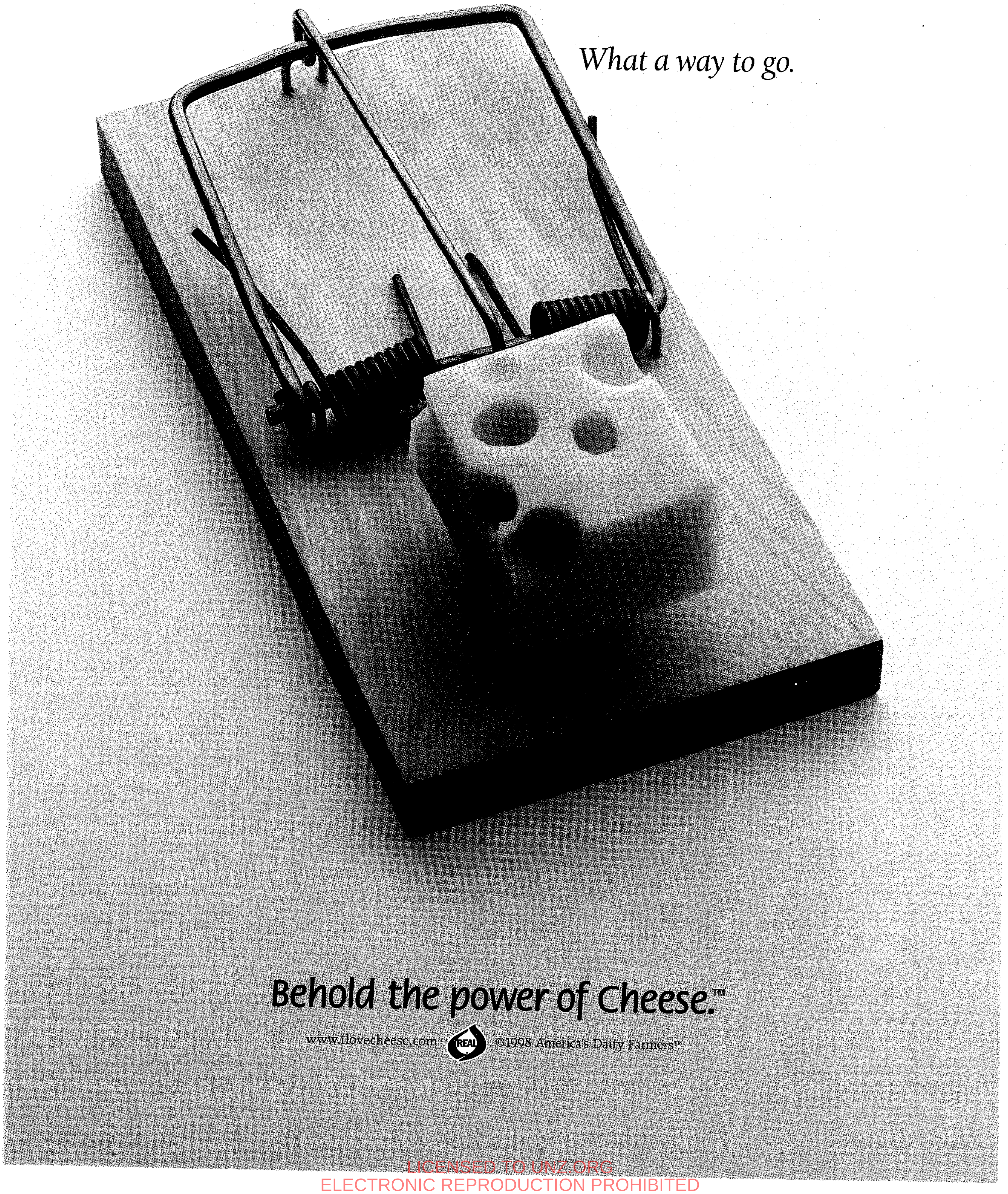
Mary Frank—These irregularly shaped panels and hinged triptychs, which the artist calls "inscapes," are loosely executed, almost funky images of nightmares: an owl-headed man, rendered in shocking-blue impasto and outlined in electric red, falls heavily through space; a female figure frantically bails water from a boat sinking in a poisonous red sea. The surfaces are as violent as the colors, occasionally sprinkled with pumice or scraped with a comb. Through April 4. (DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111.)

Félicien Rops (1833-98)—Louche and inventive drawings by the Belgian artist and friend of Baudelaire, Flaubert, et al. In their refinement and syphilis-inspired anxieties, Rops's scenes of casual priapism are in keeping with the obsessions of his confrères. It's also easy to spot similarities with more contemporary artists, such as Carroll Dunham or the Chapman brothers, who also depict phalluses with a Tourette-ish frequency. Through April 25. (Shepherd, 21 E. 84th St. 861-4050.)

Maria Martins (1894-1973)—Thirty-one sculptures from the forties by the Brazilian Surrealist, including "The Road; The Shadow; Too Long, Too Narrow" and "The Eighth Veil." Through April 18. (Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. 752-0124.)

"Giacometti and Japanese Sculpture"—An almost excessively elegant installation housing just two works of art: a bronze sculpture by Alberto Giacometti—a frontal, standing nude from 1953, somewhat more voluptuously wrought than the emaciated figures the artist is best known for—and an exquisite Japanese gilt bronze of a bodhisattva, from the early Nara period (seventh century A.D.). The two works don't particularly resonate, but each deserves the deep contemplation the exhibition invites. Through April 25. (Yoshii, 20 W. 57th St. 265-8876.)

Short List—**HUGO BASTIDAS,** Haime, 41 E. 57th St. 888-3550. Open Mondays; through April 18. . . . **QUENTIN BELL,** Davis & Langdale, 231 E. 60th St. 838-0333. Through April 18. . . . **FRITZ BULTMAN,** Schlesinger, 24 E. 73rd St. 734-3600. Through April 30. . . . **ANTHONY CARO** and **RICHARD ESTES,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900. Open Mondays; both shows through April 25. . . . **JUDITH COTTON,** Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 535-5767. Through April 11. . . . **TONY CRAGG,** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160. Open Mondays; through April 25. . . . **JOHN FERREN,** Snyder, 20 W. 57th St. 262-1160. Through April 25. . . . **GIAMBOLOGNA,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606.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Open Mondays; through April 4. . . . **LEON GOLDIN** and **ANNE RYAN**, Kraushaar, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 307-5730. Both shows through April 4. . . . **ADOLPH GOTTLIEB**, Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550. Through April 4. . . . **JOHN LEES**, Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St. 535-8810. Through April 18. . . . **AGNES MARTIN**, Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292. Through April 25. . . . **JOHN SIDELI**, Giampietro, 25 E. 73rd St. 861-8571. Through May 2. . . . **ESTEBAN VICENTE**, Berry-Hill, 11 E. 70th St. 744-2300. Open Mondays; through April 18. . . . **BEATRICE WOOD** and **ELIE NADELMAN**, Clark, 24 W. 57th St. 246-2205. Both shows through April 4.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Matthew Benedict—"The Magus and Other Tales," large-scale gouaches and mounted embroideries by a young artist with a keen interest in myth and theatricality. In one picture, a sea captain is at the wheel of his ship during a raging storm; for some reason, he is outfitted with a mitre and crook. Benedict's works are also charged with a muted but unmistakable homoeroticism. Through April 25. (Alexander and Bonin, 132 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 367-7474.)

Alice Neel (1900-84)—"Men in Suits," a series of paintings from the fifties through the seventies of just what the exhibition title promises, all rendered in the artist's signature style of ironic Expressionism. The only double portrait in the show—of the art critics David Bourdon and Gregory Battcock—really stands out: the former wears a suit, but the latter appears in a white tank top, yellow briefs, and lurid red socks. Through April 25. (Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727.)

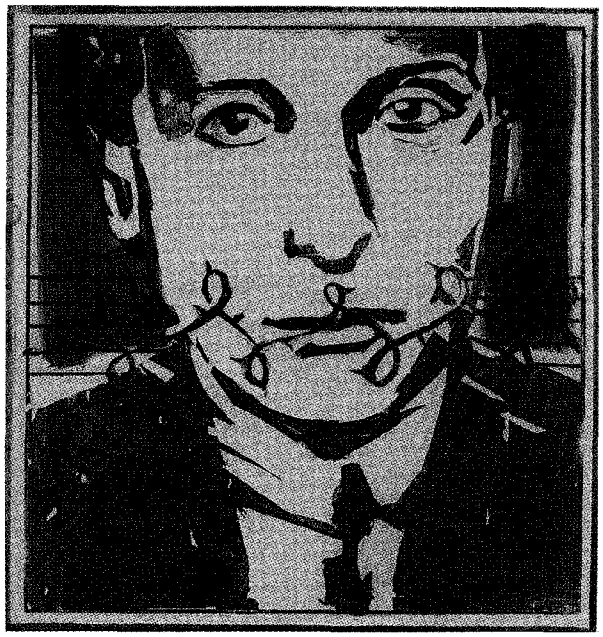
Short List—**RICCI ALBENDA**, Kreps, 529 W. 20th St. 741-8849. Through April 4. . . . **MARY HEILMANN**, Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. 727-7366. Through April 18. . . . **RONALD JONES**, Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100. Through April 11. . . . **SHARON LOUDEN**, Anderson, 453 W. 17th St. 463-0970. Through April 4. . . . **JOHN LOVETT AND ALESSANDRO CODAGNONE**, XL, 504 W. 22nd St. 462-4111. Through April 12. . . . **JASON MIDDLEBROOK**, Martz, 529 W. 20th St. 206-3686. Through April 18. . . . **TOM MOODY** and **DAVID CLARKSON**, Eller, 529 W. 20th St. 206-6411. Both shows through April 18. . . . **REI NAITO**, D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 352-9460. Through April 18. . . . **MICHAEL ST. JOHN**, Team, 527 W. 26th St. 279-9219. Through April 18. . . . **DAN WALSH**, Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105. Through April 25. . . . **RANDY WALZ**, Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2752. Through April 18. . . . **MARY WEATHERFORD**, Debs, 529 W. 20th St. 647-7080. Through April 29.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

John Chamberlain—A pair of sculptures of crushed and painted steel, "The Privet" and "The Hedge," sixty and fifty feet long, respectively, which the artist calls "Fauve Landscapes." Through April 25. (Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St. 431-9224.)

"Archigram"—Drawings, maquettes, installations, and other re-creations of the capsule structures, plug-in environments, and walking cities, etc., envisioned by counterculture architects in the sixties and early seventies. Through April 25. (Thread Waxing Space, 476 Broadway. 966-9520.)

Short List—**MATTHEW ANTEZZO**, Basilico Fine Arts, 26 Wooster St. 966-1831. Through April 25. . . . **PIER CONSAGRA**, Holly Solomon, 172 Mercer St. 941-5777. Through April 25. . . . **WIM DELVOYE**, Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway. 966-6160. Through April 25. . . . **MARCEL DZAMA**, Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074. Through April 18. . . . **MARY ESCH**, Bronwyn Keenan, 3 Crosby St. 431-5083. Through April 18. . . . **CARL FUDGE**, Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232. Through April 25. . . . **ELLEN GALLAGHER**, Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. 228-2828. Through April 11. . . . **MICHELE HARVEY**, Bridgewater/Lustberg, 560 Broadway. 941-6355. Through April 18. . . . **PETER HRISTOFF**, Beitzel, 102 Prince St. 219-2863. Through April 25. . . . **JENIFER KOBYLARZ**, Thorp, 103 Prince St. 431-6880. Through April 4. . . . **SHARON LOCKHART**, Petzel, 26 Wooster St. 334-9466. Through April 4. . . . **LIZA LOU**, P.P.O.W, 476 Broome St. 941-8642. Through April 18. . . . **SEAN MELLYN**, Kustera, 41 Wooster St. 965-1527. Through May 2. . . . **FRANK MOORE**, Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. 431-3685. Through April 25. . . . **CORNELIA PARKER**, Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300. Through April 18. . . . **JULIA SCHER**, Rosen, 130 Prince St. 941-0203. Through April 25. . . . **RUBÉN TORRES-LLORCA**, Knowlton, 568 Broadway. 966-2625. Through April 25. . . . **JULIAN TRIGO**, Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St. 219-9600. Through April 11. . . . **RICK UNRUH**, Hurley, 568 Broadway. 343-8930. Through April 15.



Composer Viktor Ullmann, celebrated by Continuum, at Merkin Concert Hall (see Classical Music).

HADLEY HOOPER

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Christie's—April 2: European and Oriental carpets. . . . ¶ April 2: Fine and collectible wines. . . . ¶ April 6-7: An auction of jewelry, including a brooch once owned and frequently worn by Eva Peron, crafted by Van Cleef & Arpels from diamonds and sapphires to reproduce the Argentinean flag, waving on a platinum flagpole. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.)

Phillips—April 6: An auction of the Verneuil photography collection. (406 E. 79th St. 570-4830.)

Swann—A daylong photography auction that includes Calamity Jane's family photo album and a rare, hand-colored ambrotype (circa 1854-56) of the Hawaiian Queen Konia. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710. April 6.)

Triple Pier Expo—The second and final weekend of this vast antique show, with exhibitors from the preceding weekend ostensibly showing completely different stock. (Piers 88, 90, and 92, Twelfth Ave. between 48th and 52nd Sts. April 4-5. For information, call 255-0020.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Ilse Bing (1899-1998)—Vintage prints by the avant-garde photographer, who died just three weeks ago. The show was to have been in celebration of her ninety-ninth birthday (March 23). Through May 2. (Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070.)

Andrew Bush—Three shelves of fetishistic "Envelopes"—trompe-l'oeil images in old printer's frames—are the coup de théâtre of this teasing mini-retrospective. Through April 4. (Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747.)

Susan Unterberg—"Water Dreams," a suite of well-executed, pastoral meditations on landscape. Through April 4. (Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255.)

"Larry Burrows at War: Vietnam, 1962-71" / "In Country: Vietnam Revisited"—Thirty color and black-and-white pictures by the intrepid war photographer, who was killed in action. / Photographs taken since 1993 by Mitch Epstein, Lois Conner, An-My Lê, and Abby Robinson. Both shows through April 11. (Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. 226-1220.)

International Center of Photography—"Micha Bar-Am: An Israeli Photobiography." Through May 31. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

International Center of Photography Midtown—"Robert Capa: Photographs," a retrospective of the war correspondent's career. Through June 7. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**EDOUARD-DENIS BALDUS**, Alan Klotz/Photocollect, 22 E. 72nd St. 327-2211. Closed Tuesdays; through April 18. . . . **UTA BARTH**, Bonakdar Jancou, 521 W. 21st St. 925-8035. Through April 23. . . . **CECIL BEATON**, Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 966-6223. Through April 18. . . . **LEENDERT BLOK**, Schoormans, 12 E. 2nd St. 477-6953. Through April 25. . . . **JAMES CASEBERE**, Sean Kelly, 43 Mercer St. 343-2405. Through April 25. . . . **HANNAH COLLINS**, Castelli, 420 West Broadway. 431-5160. Through April 25. . . . **ROBERT CUMMING**, Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166. Through April 4. . . . **ANDREAS FEININGER**, SoHo Triad Fine Arts, 107 Grand St. 965-9500. Open daily; through April 12. . . . **CHARLES HAGEN**, Morthland, 225 Tenth Ave., at 23rd St. 242-7767. Open Sundays, noon to 5; through April 26. . . . **JOHN M. HALL**, Beadleston, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 581-7544. Through April 8. . . . **SIMPSON KALISHER**, De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482. Through April 25. . . . **ALEXANDER LIBERMAN**, Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766. Through April 18. . . . **O. WINSTON LINK**, Mann, 42 E. 76th St. 570-1223. Through May 2. . . . **RALPH EUGENE MEATYARD**, Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010. Through April 25. . . . **INGE MORATH**, Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051. Opens Saturdays at noon; through May 2. . . . **DIANA NICCOLINI**, Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. 223-1059. Through April 4. . . . **CATHERINE OPIE**, Gorney, 100 Greene St. 966-4480. Through April 25. . . . **LILLO RAYMOND**, Witkin, 415 West Broadway. 925-5510. Through April 25. . . . **IRA RICHER**, Kasher, 54 North Moore St. 966-3978. Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6; through April 18. . . . **AUGUST SANDER**, Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727. Through April 25. . . . **TOKIHIRO SATO**, Tonkonow, 601 W. 26th St. 255-8450. Through April 25. . . . **AARON SISKIND**, Carr, 478 West Broadway. 673-5518. Closed Tuesdays; through April 11. . . . **DAVID SMITH**, Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200. Through April 18. . . . **PAUL STRAND**, Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. 505-5555. Through April 4. . . . **ED VAN DER ELSKEN**, Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Through April 25. . . . **CATHERINE WAGNER**, Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 645-1701. Through April 11. . . . **WILLIAM WEGMAN**, Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Through April 25. . . . **STANISLAW IGNACY WITKIEWICZ**, Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454. Through May 2. *(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Modern Art.)*

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Alice Tully Hall is 875-5050; for Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030; and for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall, 247-7800.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**ROMÉO ET JULIETTE,** with Maureen O'Flynn, Jane Dutton, Paul Charles Clarke, Mark Oswald, and Robert Lloyd; conducted by Bertrand de Billy. (April 1 at 7:30.)... With Angela Gheorghiu, Kristine Jepson, Roberto Alagna, Russell Braun, and Mr. Lloyd; Mr. de Billy. (April 4 at 8.)... **LOHENGRIN,** with Deborah Voigt, Eva Urbanová, Johan Botha, Richard Paul Fink, and Eric Halfvarson; James Levine. (April 2 at 7.)... **MADAMA BUTTERFLY,** with Galina Gorchakova, Robynne Redmon, Michael Sylvester, and Lucio Gallo; Carlo Rizzi. (April 3 at 8.)... **STIFFELIO,** by Verdi, with Sharon Sweet, Plácido Domingo, Haijing Fu, and Paul Plishka; Mr. Levine. (April 4 at 1:30.)... With Jeffrey Wells instead of Mr. Plishka. (April 7 at 8.)... **DIE MEISTERSINGER VON NÜRNBERG,** with Eva Johansson, Wendy White, Ben Heppner, Gert Henning-Jensen, and James Johnson; Mr. Levine. (April 6 at 6.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.... **NOTE:** On April 5 at 3, Ten winners of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions will perform in recital, with Charles Mackerras conducting the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra.)

New York City Opera—**LE NOZZE DI FIGARO.** (April 2 at 7:30 and April 5 at 1:30.)... **LES CONTES D'HOFFMANN.** (April 3 at 8 and April 7 at 7:30.)... **EMMELINE,** by Tobias Picker, with Patricia Racette in the title role. (April 4 at 1:30.)... **MADAMA BUTTERFLY.** (April 4 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

Bronx Arts Ensemble—Roberto Sierra's chamber opera "El Mensajero de Plata," fully staged, with a cast that includes soprano Rachel Rosales, tenor Eduardo Valdez, and bass Kevin Deas. Genesio Riboldi conducts. (Hostos Center for the Arts and Culture, 450 Grand Concourse, the Bronx. April 4 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 718-601-7399.)

Amato Opera Company—Final performances of "Rigoletto." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. April 4 at 7:30 and April 5 at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—André Previn conducts Ravel's "Alborada del Gracioso" and "Daphnis et Chloé" Suite No. 2, as well as three works featuring soprano Barbara Bonney: Copland's "Eight Poems of Emily Dickinson" and Mr. Previn's own "Sallie Chisum Remembers Billy the Kid" and "Vocalise." (Avery Fisher Hall. April 2-4 and April 6 at 8.)

Orchestra of St. Luke's and Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chamber Chorus—Robert Shaw directs Bach's B-Minor Mass, with soloists Heidi Grant Murphy (soprano), Delores Ziegler and Marietta Simpson (mezzo-sopranos), Karl Dent (tenor), William Stone (baritone), and Peter Rose (bass). (Carnegie Hall. April 3 at 7:30.)

Amor Artis Chorus and Orchestra—Johannes Somary directs the rarely performed "St. Mark Passion," from 1717, by the Baroque opera composer Reinhard Keiser. Though musical settings of the Passion were popular Holy Week fare throughout Lutheran Germany in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, most music lovers know the genre only through Bach's two masterpieces, derived from the Gospels According to St. Matthew and St. John. (Aficionados of sacred music may want to check out three Passions by Schütz—based on the Books of Matthew, Luke, and John—that date from nearly a century before Bach's; Berlin Classics has just reissued classic interpretations from the nineteen-sixties and -seventies, featuring tenor Peter Schreier.) Keiser somewhat prefigures Bach in his orchestration (Bach, in fact, is known to have conducted Keiser's St. Mark Passion on Good Friday of 1726), but the composer he may most resemble is Handel, his onetime colleague at the Hamburg Opera House. Accordingly, the program is rounded out by Handel's cantata "Laudate Pueri Dominum." (St. Jean Baptiste Church, Lexington Ave. at 76th St. April 3 at 8. For information about tickets, call 874-4513.)

New York's Ensemble for Early Music—The group's singers, assisted by members of New York's Grande Bande, perform Schütz's "Die Sieben Worte Jesu Christi" (written in 1645), along with Lenten and Easter works by Monteverdi and others. (Church of St. Mary the Virgin, 145 W. 46th St. April 4 at 8. For information about tickets, call 749-6600.)

American Symphony Orchestra—Leon Botstein leads three works inspired by visions of childhood: Elgar's "The Wand of Youth" Suite No. 1, Charles Martin Loeffler's "Memories of My Childhood," and Strauss's "Sinfonia Domestica." (Avery Fisher Hall. April 5 at 3.)

"Messiah"—Handel's ultrafamiliar oratorio may be Christmas fare today, but when it was new it was intended for the Easter season. In this performance of the Easter portion, Stephen Hamilton directs the Holy Trinity Choir, with soloists and an orchestra. (Church of the Holy Trinity, 316 E. 88th St. 289-4100. April 5 at 4.)

Lenten Classics—A concert comprising two classic funeral works appropriate to the Lenten season—Bach's Cantata No. 106 ("Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit") and Schütz's "Musicalische Exequien"—as well as a new funeral cantata by Hayes Biggs, "In the Midst of Life We Are in Death." Gail Archer directs the Choir of All Saints

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Church. (All Saints Church, 230 E. 60th St. 758-0447. April 5 at 5.)

Juilliard Orchestra—Performing Mozart's overture to "Der Schauspieldirektor," Strauss's "Burleske" (with pianist Amelia Kawa) and "Dance of the Seven Veils" (from "Salome"), and Debussy's "La Mer." Otto-Werner Mueller conducts. (Avery Fisher Hall. April 7 at 8.)

RECITALS

L'Antica Musica New York—Members of the early-music group—plucked-string players Joel Frederiksen and Gregory Hamilton, plus (for this concert) mezzo-soprano Jennifer Lane—offer monodies, arias, cantatas, and other vocal works from the dawn of the Italian Baroque, by Giulio Caccini, Sigismondo d'India, and Monteverdi, among others. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St. 378-0248. April 1 at 7:30.)

Alfred Brendel—The pianist performs Mozart's C-Minor Fantasy (K. 396) and B-Flat-Major Sonata (K. 570), Schubert's G-Major Sonata (D. 894), and Haydn's E-Flat-Major Sonata (Hob. XVI:52). (Carnegie Hall. April 1 at 7:30. . . . **note:** On April 2 at 6, at the Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St., Mr. Brendel participates in a roundtable about music, literature, and the visual arts. For tickets, call 570-3949.)

Tokyo String Quartet—Performing quartets by Haydn (in D Minor, Op. 76, No. 3), Schnittke (his Third), and Smetana (in E Minor). (Alice Tully Hall. April 1 at 8.)

Washington Square Contemporary Music Society—Presenting six works composed in the nineteen-nineties, including premières of works by Leo Kraft, Chien-Yin Chen, Louis Karchin, and Bruce Taub. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. April 1 at 8.)

Bargemusic—Presenting Haydn's String Quartet in D Major (Op. 20, No. 4), as well as the quartet version of his "Seven Last Words of Christ." (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. April 2 at 7:30 and April 5 at 4.)

Priya Mitchell—Violinist, with pianist Robert Kulek, performing sonatas by Schubert (in A Minor), Schumann (in D Minor), and Fauré (his First), as well as Lutoslawski's "Subito." (Weill Recital Hall. April 3 at 8.)

Orion String Quartet—Playing quartets by Beethoven (in A Major, Op. 18, No. 5), Mendelssohn (in F Minor), and Dvořák (in F Major, Op 96). (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. April 3 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Elena Wolkonsky—Pianist, performing sonatas by Beethoven (in C Major, Op. 53, the "Waldstein"), Schumann (in G Minor, Op. 22), and Chopin (in B-Flat Minor, Op. 35). (Carnegie Hall. April 4 at 3.)

Anonymous 4—The women's vocal quartet performs music of Hildegarde von Bingen inspired by the legend of St. Ursula. (The Cloisters, Fort Tryon Park. 923-3700. April 4-5 at 3.)

Continuum—Viktor Ullmann was one of the small legion of gifted composers who met their end in a Nazi gas chamber. In his case, the last stop was apparently Auschwitz, but before that he spent two years at the camp of Theresienstadt (Terezin, in Ullmann's native Czech), a sort of "Potemkin camp" in which artistic types could create and mount theatrical and other artistic shows to impress visitors. While there, Ullmann wrote several works that would have outraged his wardens, had they bothered to look, including his anti-Fascist opera, "Der Kaiser von Atlantis," and his last work, "Die Weise von Liebe und Tod des Cornets Christoph Rilke" (a setting of Rilke's great pacifist epic poem). In this concert, Continuum performs the entire "Rilke" composition and an excerpt from the opera, as well as Ullmann's Piano Sonata No. 4 and String Quartet No. 3. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. April 4 at 7:30.)

Music at the Institute—Violinist Viktor Tretyakov, cellist Stephen Kates, and pianist Alexander Slobodyanik perform Rachmaninoff's "Trio Élégiaque" No. 2 and Mendelssohn's C-Minor Piano Trio. (Ukrainian Institute, 2 E. 79th St. 288-8660. April 4 at 8.)

Guarneri Quartet—April 4 at 8: Performing Beethoven's String Quartets in B-Flat Major (Op. 130) and F Major (Op. 59, No. 1). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949.) . . . ¶ April 5 at 3: The ensemble offers its traditional Palm Sunday performance of Haydn's "Seven Last Words of Christ." (New School, 66 W. 12th St. 229-5689.)

Emerson String Quartet—The foursome plays Beethoven's Quartets in B-Flat Major (Op. 18, No. 6) and C-Sharp Minor (Op. 131), as well as Shostakovich's Quartet No. 8. (Alice Tully Hall. April 5 at 2.)

García Lorca Centennial—Mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves, guitarist Sharon Isbin, and soprano Ana Maria Martinez team up for a concert of songs by Lorca (his "5 Canciones Españolas Antiguas"), in addition to compositions by Granados, Tárrega, and others of his Spanish contemporaries. Readings from his poetry will be interspersed. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St., 996-1100. April 5 at 3.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—Pianist Charles Wadsworth is joined by numerous colleagues to perform songs and chamber music by Poulenc, Debussy, Fauré, and other French composers. (Alice Tully Hall. April 5 at 5 and April 7 at 7:30.)

An die Musik—The ensemble performs chamber works that inspired specific paintings by Helen Frankenthaler, David Hockney, Robert Motherwell, and Kenneth Noland. The musical works in question include Beethoven's Piano-and-Winds Quintet, Mozart's Oboe Quartet and E-Flat-Major Piano Quartet, and Schubert's String Trio in B-Flat Major. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. April 5 at 6.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Poetry in Motion—For the third time in as many years, the Academy of American Poets has declared cruellest April as National Poetry Month. To celebrate, Andrew Carroll, a twenty-eight-year-old self-styled Johnny Appleseed of poetry (in 1993 he teamed up with Joseph Brodsky to distribute poetry books in hotel rooms, à la Gideon Bibles), is spending the month on the road, from New York City to San Francisco, giving away volumes of verse. His itinerary includes the Walt Whitman Bridge, in Philadelphia (for copies of Whitman's "Selected Poems"), Houston, Texas (T. S. Eliot's "The Waste-land"), and Roswell, New Mexico (Mina Loy's "The Lost Lunar Baedeker"). On April 1 at 8, singer Laurie Anderson, choreographer Bill T. Jones, writer Garrison Keillor, and others send Carroll on his way, with readings from the poems they like best. United States Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky, who is compiling a multimedia archive of Americans reading their favorite poems, introduces the evening. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. For more information, call 274-0343, ext. 18.)

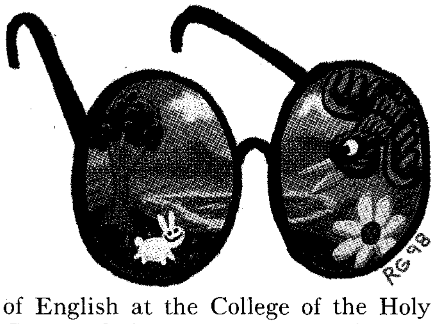
Other Poetry Events—April 3 at 7: Poets Nikki Giovanni and Robert Hass join *Harper's* editor Lewis H. Lapham for a discussion of poetry, literacy, and democracy. (Poets House, 72 Spring St. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ April 6 at 8: Poets Robert Bly, Galway Kinnell, and Philip Levine celebrate the centennial of Federico García Lorca's birth with a reading of the Spaniard's poems. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

Other Talks—April 4 at 2: Historian Henry Foner and writer Howard Fast ("Peekskill, USA" and "Being Red") discuss their friendship with the artist and activist Paul Robeson. (New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. 873-3400.) . . . ¶ April 6 at 7: Dr. Alejandro Berenstein, co-director of Beth Israel's Institute for Neurology and Neurosurgery, leads a tour of his operating rooms and explains brain surgery. (Beth Israel Medical Center North, East End Ave. at 87th St. For more information, call 800-420-4004.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Poetry au Naturel

"If you write nature poetry," the poet Robert Cording says, "you believe in a reality that exists in the world. You may not be able to fully reveal it in a poem, but it somehow lies behind the poem." Cording, who is a professor of English at the College of the Holy Cross, and whose latest collection of poems is **Heavy Grace** (Alice James Books), feels that "the central dilemma of nature poetry is the question, Where does meaning reside?" Does it lie in the tangible world around us, for instance, in the cerebral recesses of the mind, or in the written word of the poem? The common thread in Cording's favorite poems about nature is the poet's struggle to ascertain "whether we're discovering meaning or creating it."



Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," Cording feels, is a "crisis poem," in which the poet recognizes that his response to nature is no longer as immediate and uncomplicated as it once was. Wordsworth's tack also overlaps with that of Emerson, who, Cording reminds us, believed that every natural fact is a symbol of a spiritual fact. The poet identifies something of the same quandary in Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale": "How do we approach in language—which is abstract and static—the world of nature, which is particular and changing by the minute?"

Among the poets who have taken up that inquiry in our century, Cording cites Wallace Stevens, whose "Not Ideas About the Thing but the Thing Itself" is a neat summation of the problem, and A. R. Ammons, whose "Corsons Inlet" gives voice to the idea that a poet "has to come up with some way of embodying the formlessness of nature, even though there's an order in that formlessness." In "Meditation at Lagunitas," Robert Hass limns the difficulties that language has in capturing physical reality when he writes, "each particular erases / the luminous clarity."

In the words of one of Cording's poems, poetry is a way "to cherish / What binds us to this world." "Every word is an event," he says, "because it contains so much of felt experience." Although poetry may never resolve Cording's dilemma of whether meaning is revealed or created, in the best works it does both.

RODNEY ALAN GREENBLATT

THE Book PAGE.

POEMS FOR THE MILLENNIUM

Edited by Jerome Rothenberg and Pierre Joris

With dual focus on movements and messengers, the second volume of *Poems for the Millennium,* chronicling poetry from the postwar period to today, is less a canon than "a mapping of the possibilities which have come down to us by the century's turning." (University of California Press)

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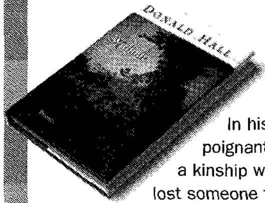

WITHOUT

by Donald Hall

In his most personal and poignant work yet, Hall forms a kinship with anyone who has lost someone they love. *Without* is a tribute to Hall's wife Jane Kenyon and a spiritual companion to her posthumous bestseller, *Otherwise.* (Houghton Mifflin)

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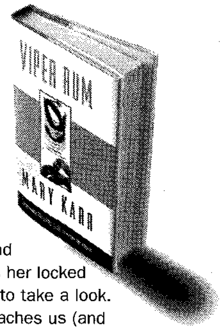

VIPER RUM

by Mary Karr

Viper Rum finds Mary Karr in the autobiographical terrain of earlier works: unsentimental, unsparing, and captivating. She opens her locked closets and invites us to take a look. Never preachy, Karr teaches us (and herself) through her own experience, which she does without a word wasted. (Norton)

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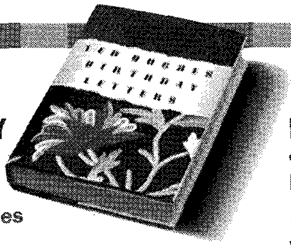

BIRTHDAY LETTERS

by Ted Hughes

In 1956, Ted Hughes married Sylvia Plath. In 1957, he published his first book of poetry. Now, more than thirty years after Plath's suicide, Ted, Sylvia, and poetry are reunited. In *Birthday Letters,* a collection almost exclusively devoted to Plath, Hughes gives a mesmerizing personal account. (FSG)

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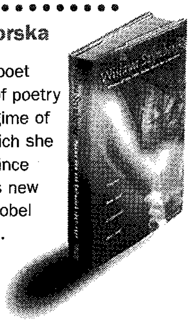

POEMS NEW AND COLLECTED 1957-1997

by Wislawa Szymborska

The Nobel Prize-winning poet published two volumes of poetry under the totalitarian regime of Josef Stalin—both of which she now disowns. She has since reclaimed her voice. This new collection includes her Nobel Prize acceptance speech. (Harcourt Brace)

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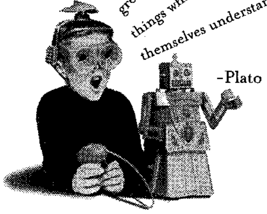
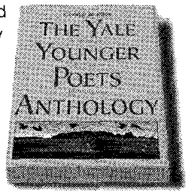
Poets utter great and wise things which they do not themselves understand.

-Plato





THE YALE YOUNGER POETS ANTHOLOGY

Edited by George Bradley

Begun in 1919 as a venue for publishing first books of poetry, this anthology collects the best of the longest-running poetry series in the U.S. Adrienne Rich, John Hollander, John Ashberry, James Agee, Muriel Rukeyser, and Robert Hass, among many others, are represented. (Yale University Press)

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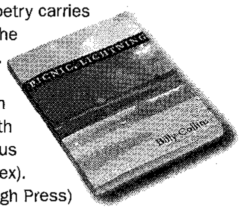
B&N Price $12.80



PICNIC, LIGHTNING

by Billy Collins

Billy Collins uses his comic agility to make you laugh, then think, then learn. Collins' distinctly American poetry carries both the dream and the reality of this country. This latest collection toys with themes both serious (such as death and sex) and humorous (such as death and sex). (University of Pittsburgh Press)

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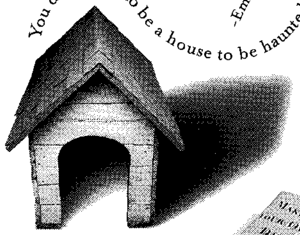
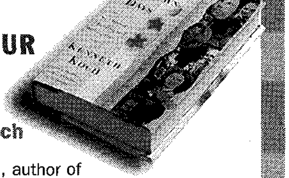
B&N Price $10.36

You don't have to be a house to be haunted.

-Emily Dickinson





MAKING YOUR OWN DAYS

by Kenneth Koch

Poet Kenneth Koch, author of the classic bestseller *Rose, Where Did You Get That Red?,* dispenses life lessons on poetry. Koch's explanations of the mechanics and meaning of verse will lead you to appreciate it as the transcendent extension of communication it can be. (Simon & Schuster)

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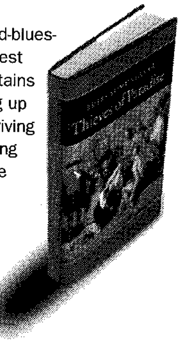


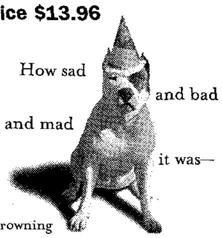
THIEVES OF PARADISE

by Yusef Komunyakaa

Yusef Komunyakaa's jazz-and-blues-inflected style drives this latest collection of poetry that contains all the experience of growing up in Bogalusa, Louisiana, surviving the Vietnam War, and teaching throughout America, from the University of New Orleans to Berkeley to Princeton. (Wesleyan University Press)

Pub. Price $19.95 Discount **30%**

B&N Price $13.96



How sad and bad and mad it was—

-Robert Browning

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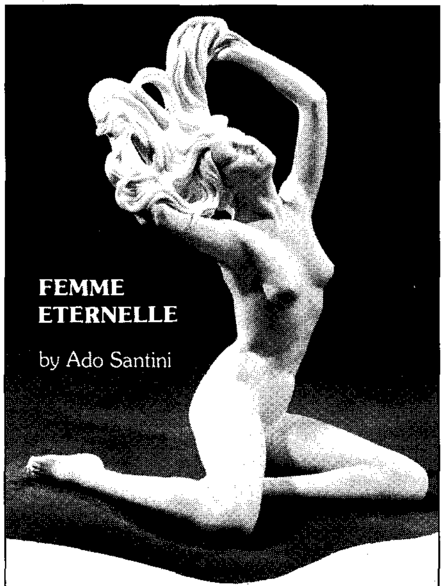

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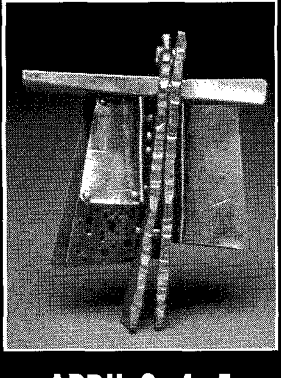

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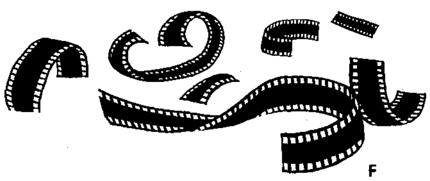


OPENINGS

The Butcher Boy—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening April 3. (Angelika Film Center, Beekman, and Lincoln Square.)

Eden—Joanna Going stars in this mid-sixties story of a woman with multiple sclerosis who is also a wife, mother, and mentor to a dormful of teen-agers. Also with Dylan Walsh and Sean Patrick Flanery. Written and directed by Harold Goldberg. Opening April 3. (Sutton and Village East Cinemas.)

Lost in Space—An adventure in space about the Robinson family, their sabotaged craft, and their efforts to get back to earth, based on the sixties television show. With Gary Oldman, William Hurt, Matt LeBlanc, and Mimi Rogers; directed by Stephen Hopkins. Opening April 3. (Astor Plaza, Cinema I, Cinema II, 84th Street Sixplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

Mercury Rising—A thriller, directed by Harold Becker, about an ex-F.B.I. agent (Bruce Willis) who protects a nine-year-old autistic savant from assassins. Also with Alec Baldwin. Opening April 3. (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Park & 86th Street Cinemas.)

The Spanish Prisoner—Campbell Scott, Steve Martin, Rebecca Pidgeon, Ricky Jay, and Ben Gazzara star in writer-director David Mamet's story about the twists and turns of a confidence game. Opening April 3. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Who the Hell is Juliette?—A semi-documentary, by Carlos Marcovich, about the friendship between Yuliet Ortega, a teen-ager from Cuba, and Fabiola Quiroz, a twenty-three-year-old model from Mexico. In Spanish. Opening April 1. (Cinema Village.)

FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

As Good as It Gets—A romantic comedy directed and co-written (with Mark Andrus) by James L. Brooks, in which an improbable trio overcomes a heap of troubles and finds collective happiness, sitcom style. Jack Nicholson stars as a romance novelist with a seriously alienating manner, Helen Hunt is a waitress with a young son who has a life-threatening disease, and Greg Kinnear is a gay painter with a sweet smile and no visible erotic attachments. You keep expecting to hear a laugh track.—*Daphne Merkin* (1/5/98) (Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.)

The Big Lebowski—After the mysteriously affecting "Fargo," the Coen brothers have reverted to their studied pose of cynical disengagement with a movie that—insofar as it's about anything—is about the interface of bowling and Orthodox Judaism. Set in Los Angeles, this irritatingly antic caper stars Jeff Bridges as the Dude, a carefree seventies-style dropout who hangs out at the local bowling alley with his buddies Walter (John Goodman), a chronically irate Nam vet, and Donny (Steve Buscemi), the trio's sweet but dim verbal foil. Although his laid-back existence is interrupted by at least three extortion and kidnapping plots, all of which revolve around an elderly millionaire in a wheelchair (David Huddleston), the Dude—who's not only amiable but infinitely resilient—comes out smiling, like Popeye. The clever dialogue, seductive camera work, and beautiful production design (the lavish dream sequences look like Busby Berkeley on Ecstasy) almost make you forget the vacancy at the movie's core, but in the end there's no escaping the feeling that the Coens are speaking a secret language. With Julianne Moore and John Turturro.—*D.M.* (3/23/98) (Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII. . . . ¶ Beekman; through April 2.)

Character—A drama, based on the 1938 novel by Ferdinand Bordewijk, about an illegitimate son, his vengeful father, and murder. Directed by Mike van Diem. In Dutch. (Regency.)

Fireworks—The seventh and most sombre work from the Japanese director Takeshi Kitano. The fact that his movies—like his TV appearances, radio shows, and everything else—have become a cult should not be held against the man; he has carved out his own style, clipped and elliptical, and that is rare enough these days. In the new film, which he also wrote and co-edited, Kitano plays Nishi, a policeman on the slide. Some colleagues were shot on duty, and, rightly or wrongly, Nishi takes the blame. Meanwhile, his wife is dying, so he takes her away for a country vacation, which he finances by robbing a bank; despite all the cops and gangsters on their trail, the two of them enjoy a last, almost wordless idyll. No one but Kitano would have thought to combine cold spasms of violence with such a tender portrait of marriage, or to tinge the whole tale with black comedy; if you can take that mixture, and if you can follow the sly complications of Kitano's chronology, you will not be disappointed. In Japanese.—*Anthony Lane* (3/30/98) (Film Forum.)

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (1921)—In light of the recent destruction of Sarajevo, Rex Ingram's antiwar saga, based on Vicente Blasco Ibáñez's novel about a wealthy Argentine family whose members support opposing sides during the First World War, takes on a weird relevance. This lively kitsch extravaganza deserves to be remembered for Ingram's showy design sense and for the impeccable way he and screenwriter June Mathis handle their star, Rudolph Valentino. As a playboy who grows through sacrifice, Valentino evinces a dashing melancholy, and, amazingly, his tango scene hasn't turned into camp—it's still a sexy wonderment. With Joseph Swickard, Alice Terry, and Alan Hale.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum 2; April 2.)

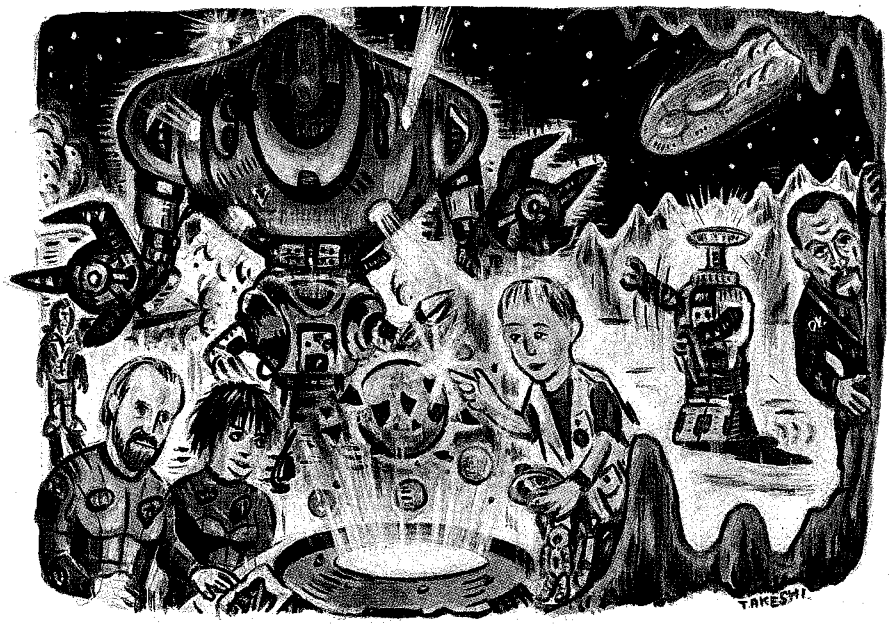
Good Will Hunting—Matt Damon plays a belligerent working-class genius from South Boston who's been abused in foster homes and is now being given a chance to triumph over his past; Robin Williams is the maverick shrink who helps him understand his demons; and Minnie Driver is the unsnobbish Harvard girlfriend who tries to heal him with acceptance. If it sounds treacly, it's not, thanks to a honed script (co-written by Damon and Ben Affleck, who plays Damon's best pal), subtle performances, and surprisingly warm direction by Gus Van Sant.—*D.M.* (1/19/98) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, and State.)

L.A. Confidential—Curtis Hanson's thriller, set in Los Angeles in the early fifties, is about a group of cops who between them cover the full moral range, from the uptight integrity of Ed Exley (Guy Pearce) to the four-star sadism of Bud White (Russell Crowe). The plot, adapted from the James Ellroy novel, is both murky and tangled, yet the movie never bogs down. Hanson paces the tale with ease, decorating it with one neat performance after another: James Cromwell as the smiling police chief, David Strathairn as an oily pimp, Kim Basinger as one of his prize charges, and, best of all, Kevin Spacey as a "celebrity crime-stopper" who gets dragged into the dark and dirty.—*A.L.* (9/22/97) (Art

Greenwich Twin, 84th Street Sixplex, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, and State.)

Love and Death on Long Island—A mischievous, surprising film about unlikely romantic pursuit. John Hurt is a British author of highbrow novels who lives in reclusive Luddite splendor until he is smitten with a teen-flick heartthrob (Jason Priestley). One of the many ways in which the film subverts our expectations is by refusing to condescend to its central character; we come to see the lovesick novelist as half stalker, half *poète maudit*, transfigured by romantic greatness. Directed by Richard Kwietniowski, the movie is less about the nature of homoerotic longing than about the closeted nature of love itself.—*D.M.* (3/9/98) (Angelika Film Center, Cinema 3rd Avenue, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

The Loved One (1965)—In 1947, Evelyn Waugh went to Hollywood to clear up censorial objections to the script for his "Brideshead Revisited"; after seven weeks he withdrew the book and went back to England. Out of his experiences he wrote the essay "Death in Hollywood," on Forest Lawn Memorial Park, and in 1948, "The Loved One," a short, satirical novel about one of the last outposts of empire—the British colony in the movie business and its renegade poet who goes to work in a cemetery for pets. Eventually, Tony Richardson was signed to direct the film, from Christopher Isherwood's script, and Terry Southern was brought in to juice the material up. Although the picture has lost its center (the poet—played by Robert Morse—has become as quirky and crazy as everybody else), some of the fragments are good and jagged. This botched picture is a triumphant disaster—a sinking ship that makes it to port because everybody on board is too giddy to panic. Milton Berle and Margaret Leighton—who might seem the world's most unlikely married couple—are quite amazing together; Rod Steiger is an embalmer; Ayllene Gibbons is his bedridden fat mother (who has orgasms from looking at the food in TV commercials); Jonathan Winters is a charlatan; and Liberace is a casket salesman.—*Pauline Kael* (A Different Light Bookstore; April 5.)



William Hurt, Lacey Chabert, Jack Johnson, and Gary Oldman in "Lost in Space."

TAKESHI TADATSU

Men with Guns—John Sayles's first film since "Lone Star" is no match for that relaxed and haunting tale. Federico Luppi (as strong here as he was in "Cronos") plays a government doctor, all white hair and good suits, who leaves his dignified life to track down his students who were sent, idealistically, into remote areas of an unnamed Latin American country. The journey involves the getting of wisdom and the loss of faith, as the doctor discovers the horrors that befell his protégés. The movie is calm and considered, but also schematic; you can't help feeling that you're being taught a lesson—a true and valuable one, perhaps, but it's still enough to block the flow of the drama. In Spanish.—*A.L.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Post Coitum—A film about the price of passion which flirts with profundity and ends up seeming merely fashionable. A forty-year-old book editor, contentedly married and the mother of two sons, has an affair with a tall, dark, and handsome engineer who also happens to be twenty years her junior. When this *amour fou* ends, the woman is unable to go on and she begins to self-destruct—until her star writer, another gorgeous young man, steps in and whisks her off to Greece, where she regains her senses. This is the sort of movie that purports to deal with such chic feminist issues as middle-aged sexual longing and the stigma of aging but that seems more at ease with chic aesthetic details—a scarf that's folded just right, tasteful sheets on a bed—than with the ungainly reality of its own unfolding drama. Co-written and directed by, and starring, Brigitte Roüan, who should have studied Truffaut's mesmerizingly melancholic "The Story of Adèle H." more carefully before taking on the psychology of love addiction. In French.—*D.M.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

A Price Above Rubies—Renée Zellweger looks alternately bewildered and pouty in her role as the wife of an ultra-Orthodox scholar (Glenn Fitzgerald) who invokes the Rebbe at every opportunity and treats marital sex as an indecent diversion from his spiritual duties. The claustrophobic feel of the couple's Borough Park community is effectively rendered, and its details—from the obligatory plastic covering on the dining-room chairs to the women's wigs and long-sleeved dresses—are authentic as can be, but the movie's emotional tone wobbles confusingly between magic realism and poorly nuanced character study. Still, there's the kernel of something interesting in this I.B. Singer-like tale of a young woman born into the wrong culture who eventually finds a way to make a new life for herself—replete with a Hispanic lover and unkosher egg rolls. With "ER"'s Julianna Margulies, who is utterly convincing as a proper Hasidic wife and mother. Written and directed by Boaz Yakin.—*D.M.* (Angelika Film Center and Paris.)

Primary Colors—Mike Nichols and Elaine May's adaptation of Joe Klein's best-seller about a Clinton-like Presidential candidate purrs along rather winningly and even manages, in the long run, to weave a sad, thoughtful tale. John Travolta peddles his Clinton imitation softly, with the sweet smile and subtle confidence that turn his character into a charming cad, and Emma Thompson, as his cool, politically driven wife, delivers a no-nonsense performance that makes their odd marriage convincing. While the film has many flaws—characters drop in and out with little reason, scenes are cut abruptly, and there's little said about just what the candidate's platform is all about (there's no political depth to May's writing)—Nichols has spun a big, brash Hollywood confection that will send audiences home with still more Clintonia to talk about.—*Bruce Diones* (Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Metro Cinema, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, Waverly, and Ziegfeld.)

Taste of Cherry—Abbas Kiarostami's new film follows a prosperous man, Mr. Badii (Homayoun Ershadi, heading up a cast of nonprofessional actors), as he drives through the parched hills around Teheran begging strangers to help bury him once he commits suicide. The result is a fascinating neorealist excursion. Mr. Badii meets a shy Kurdish soldier, an Afghani seminarian, and a gregarious museum taxidermist; Kiarostami unfolds each new character with a humanistic patience that's rare in movies these days. The director also draws on his art-school training to show us a Teheran that is a horrifying sprawl of concrete and exquisitely beautiful at the same time. The film isn't quite the masterpiece some critics are hailing it as: its sometimes ponderous existentialism seems too closely modelled on European masterpieces of a generation ago, and its ending is too clever by half. But it is a collection of small, scattered miracles. In Farsi.—*Sarah Kerr* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

Titanic—At well over three hours, James Cameron's grand new picture has plenty of romance to get through before it breaks the vessel in half. Leonardo DiCaprio plays the freewheeling Jack, who wins a steerage ticket and finds himself falling for the wealthy Rose (Kate Winslet), to the disapproval of her mother (Frances Fisher) and her brute of a fiancé (Billy Zane). The social animus of the story, like its imaginative majesty, is Dickensian; this all feels like two hundred million dollars well spent.—*A.L.* (12/15/97) (Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII. . . . ¶ Astor Plaza; through April 2.)

Twilight of the Ice Nymphs—Admirers of sumptuous fantasy films like Ridley Scott's "Legend" and Michael Powell's "The Thief of Bagdad" may enjoy what the Canadian director Guy Maddin and his melodramatic scenarist George Toles can do with minuscule budgets. Maddin's first film, "Tales from the Gimli Hospital" (1988), about a smallpox epidemic at the turn of the century, was a nightmare vision of the past (the film stock itself seemed blackened with disease). His next effort, "Archangel" (1991), was a stunning black-and-white meditation on war, filmed in the manner of the great silents. "Careful," his 1992 masterpiece, told the story of the incestuous residents of an alpine village who must remain quiet, since any loud sound might cause an avalanche. "Twilight of the Ice Nymphs" is Maddin's latest film, an absurdist comedy involving woodland nymphs, ostrich farms, and a hero who searches for perfect love. It makes sensational use of some old sound effects and it's got a pastel theatrical beauty that wouldn't be out of place in a Lewis Carroll tale. Maddin's films don't make much sense; they're romantic hallucinations that, at their purest, are about the joy of early cinema.—*B.D.* (American Museum of the Moving Image; all films described are being shown April 4-5.)

The Wedding Singer—A romantic comedy in which everything twinkles, from the credits to Adam Sandler's eyes. Sandler is Robbie Hart, once the spandex-clad lead singer of a high-school rock group, now a master of ceremonies at color-coördinated weddings in Connecticut. Drew Barrymore is a waitress who enlists his help in planning her nuptials with a junk-bond trader who clearly doesn't deserve her; she and Robbie—you guessed it—fall for each other. Long patches of the film are hilarious, and might make you nostalgic for life in the 'burbs, even if you grew up in the city. Directed by Frank Coraci, from a screenplay by Tim Herlihy.—*D.M.* (Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas.)

ALSO PLAYING

GREASE: Chelsea West, East 85th Street, First & 62nd Cinemas, Guild, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **JAMES ELLROY: DEMON DOG OF AMERICAN CRIME FICTION:** Film Forum. . . . **LIVE FLESH** (reviewed in our issue of 1/26/98): Angelika Film Center and 62nd & Broadway. . . . **THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK:** Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **MEET THE DEEDLES:** Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema II, Embassy 3, Lincoln Square, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **MRS. DALLOWAY** (2/16/98): Eastside Playhouse and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **THE NEWTON BOYS:** Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Park & 86th Street Cinemas. . . . **NO LOOKING BACK:** Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **THE PROPOSITION:** Angelika Film Center, Cinema I, and Lincoln Square. . . . **RIDE:** Embassy 1, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **U.S. MARSHALS:** Coronet Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **WIDE AWAKE:** Gotham Cinema. . . . **WILD THINGS:** Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.

At the American Museum of the Moving Image, films by, and about, director Guy Maddin.

CORNEL RUBINO

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

New Directors/New Films—A festival of international films. April 1 at 6: “The First Time” (Connie Walther; Germany). . . . April 1 at 9 and April 2 at 6: “The Perfect Circle” (Ademir Kenovic; Bosnia and France). . . . April 2 at 9: “See the Sea” (François Ozon; France). . . . April 3 at 6 and April 4 at 3: “Buffalo '66” (Vincent Gallo; United States). . . . April 3 at 9 and April 4 at 12:30: “π” (Darren Aronofsky; United States). . . . April 4 at 6 and April 5 at 3: “Thirteen” (David Williams; United States). . . . April 4 at 9 and April 5 at noon: “Secrets of the Heart” (Montxo Armendáriz; Spain). . . . April 5 at 6 and April 6 at 9: “Somersault in a Coffin” (Dervis Zaim; Turkey). . . . April 5 at 9 and April 6 at 6: “Belly Up” (Beto Brant; Brazil). . . . April 7 at 7: “The Other Shore” (Dominique Cabrera; France). . . . April 7 at 9: “Junk Mail” (Pål Sletaune; Norway). (Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. For information, call 708-9500.)

Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—April 1: “It's a Great Feeling” (1949, David Butler). . . . April 2: “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” (†). . . . From April 3: “Point of Order!” (1964, Emile de Antonio and Daniel Talbot).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—A program of Swedish films; in Swedish, with English subtitles. April 1 at 2 and 6:15: “Tic Tac” (1997, Daniel Alfredson). . . . April 1 at 4 and 9: “Adam and Eva” (1997, Hannes Holm and Måns Herngren). . . . April 2 at 2 and April 3 at 6: “Private Confessions” (1996, Liv Ullmann). . . . April 3 at 2, April 4 at 6, and April 5 at 8:30: “Jerusalem” (1996, Bille August). . . . April 3 at 9:15: “Expectations” (1997, Daniel Bergman). . . . April 4 at 4: “Their Frozen Dream” (1997, Jan Troell). . . . April 4 at 9:15: “Christmas Oratorio” (1996, Kjell-Åke Andersson). . . . April 5 at 4:15: “The Mystery of the Night of the 25th” (1915, Georg af Klercker; silent). . . . April 5 at 6:15: “White Lies” (1995, Mats Arehn). . . . April 7 at 2: “Here's Your Life” (1968, Troell). . . . ¶ Weekend showings for children. April 4-5 at 2: “Pippi Longstocking” (1997, Clive Smith).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—A documentary about the director Guy Maddin (directed by Noam Gonick), showing April 4 at 2, plus four films, being shown April 4 at 3:30 and 5:30 and April 5 at 2 and 4:30, made by Maddin between 1988 and the present (see review in Film Notes under “Twilight of the Ice Nymphs”).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). April 5 at 7, the feature will be “The Loved One” (†).

Lincoln Square, B'way at 68th St.—A weeklong series of thirty-three Warner Bros. films celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the studio. April 3: The seventies. . . . April 4: The eighties. . . . April 5: The nineties. . . . April 6: The thirties. . . . April 7: The forties. . . . April 8: The fifties. . . . April 9: The sixties. (For exact schedule, call 336-5000.)

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—A program of films directed by Vincente Aranda; in Spanish, with English subtitles. April 1 at 8:30: “Lovers” (1990) and “Intruder” (1993). . . . April 2-3 at 8:30: “Libertarians” (1993) and “Fanny Pelopaja” (1984). . . . April 4-5 at 8:30: “El Lute I & II” (1987). . . . ¶ April 2 at 8, April 4 at 4 and 6, and April 5 at 2: Six different programs of short films made by members of the Helsinki Film Co-op. . . . ¶ April 3 at 4:30 and 8:15, April 4 at 8, and April 5 at 4 and 7:30: “La Promesse” (1996, Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne) and “Flamenco” (1994, Carlos Saura). . . . ¶ April 3 at 4 and 6, April 4-5 at 4:15 and 6:15, and April 6-7 at 7 and 9:30: “Pereira Declares” (1995, Roberto Faenza; in Italian). . . . ¶ April 4-5 at 2: “This Land Is Mine” (1943, Jean Renoir). . . . ¶ April 7 at 8 and 10: “First Teacher” (1965, Andrei Konchalovsky; in Russian).

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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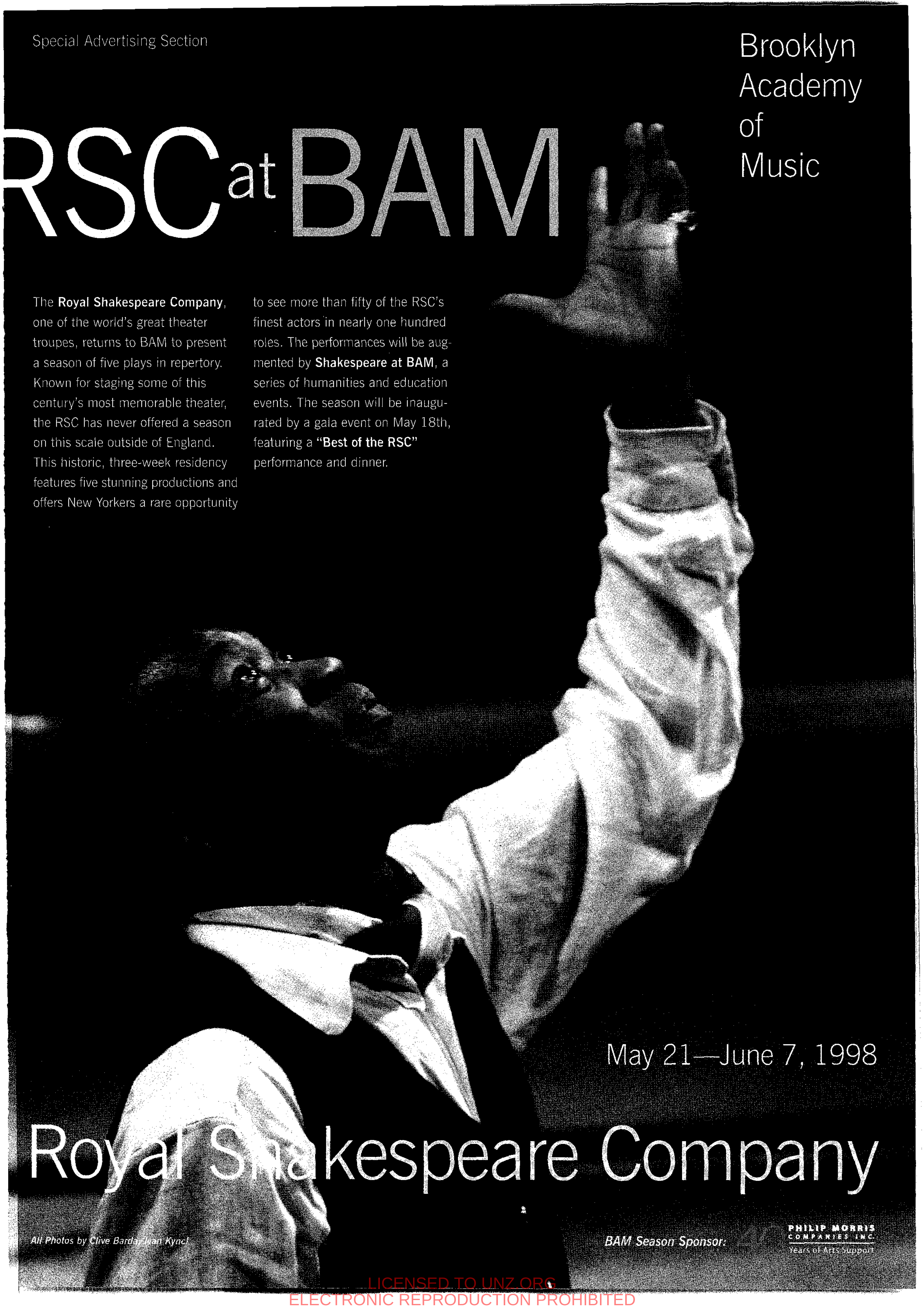
(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy 1, 2, and 3, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.



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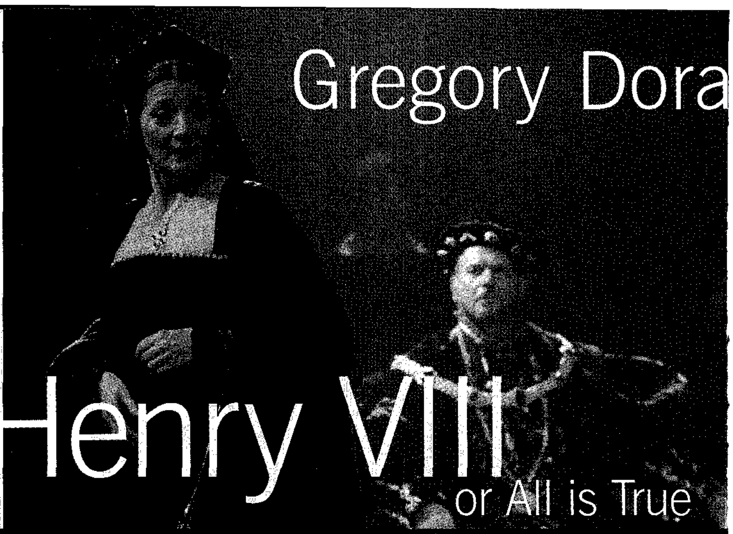
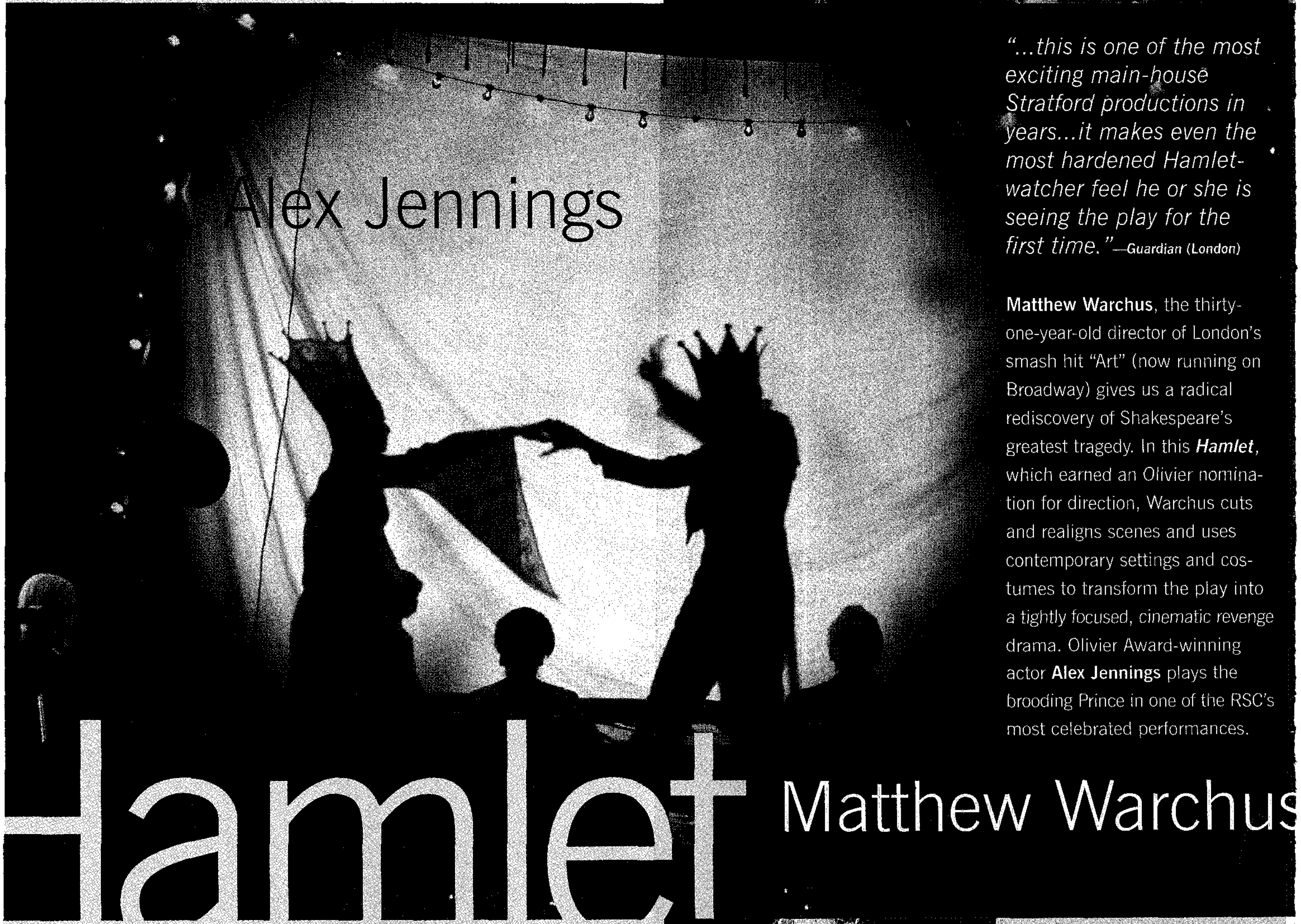


Gregory Dora

Henry VIII

or All is True



Alex Jennings

"...this is one of the most exciting main-house Stratford productions in years...it makes even the most hardened Hamlet-watcher feel he or she is seeing the play for the first time."—**Guardian (London)**

Matthew Warchus, the thirty-one-year-old director of London's smash hit "Art" (now running on Broadway) gives us a radical rediscovery of Shakespeare's greatest tragedy. In this ***Hamlet***, which earned an Olivier nomination for direction, Warchus cuts and realigns scenes and uses contemporary settings and costumes to transform the play into a tightly focused, cinematic revenge drama. Olivier Award-winning actor **Alex Jennings** plays the brooding Prince in one of the RSC's most celebrated performances.

Hamlet

Matthew Warchus

Hamlet

by William Shakespeare

Royal Shakespeare Company
Directed by **Matthew Warchus**

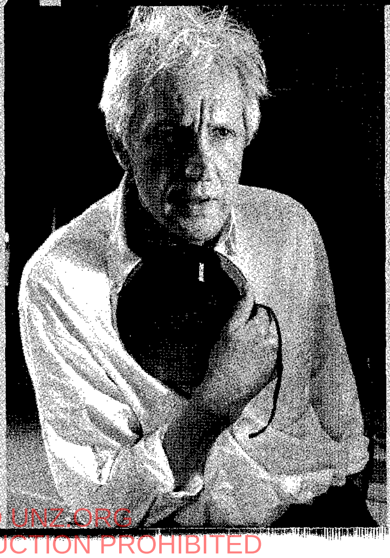
BAM Opera House
May 21—23, 26—30 at 7:30pm
May 23 at 2pm; May 24 at 3pm
Tickets: $50, 35, 20

Henry VIII

by William Shakespeare

Royal Shakespeare Company
Directed by **Gregory Doran**

BAM Majestic Theater
May 26—30 at 7:30pm
May 30 at 2pm; May 31 at 3pm
Tickets: $50, 35, 20



Krapp's Last Tape

by Samuel Beckett

Royal Shakespeare Company
Directed and performed by **Edward Petherbridge**, directed in association with David Hunt

BAM Majestic The **-29**
Tickets: $2 mission)

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Tina Brown, Chairman, RSC Season at BAM

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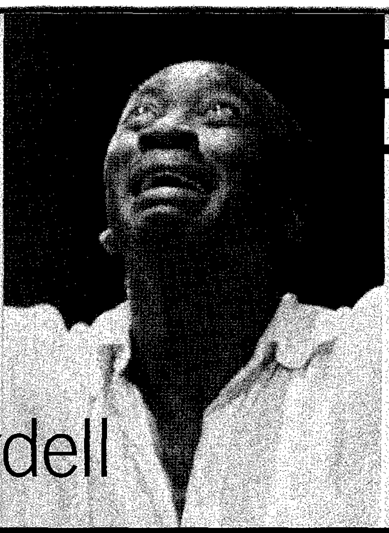

Joseph Mydell

Everyman

Everyman, a cornerstone of the English-speaking theater, tells the enigmatic tale of a doomed sinner's journey to better himself in the eyes of God. An anonymous artifact from the fifteenth century this "morality play" confronts the ultimate existential question: In the face of death, what is the meaning of life?

Directors **Kathryn Hunter** and **Marcello Magni**, both members of Théâtre de Complicité, breathe new life into the largely forgotten but still vivid text. Featuring allegorical characters such as Good Deeds, Knowledge, Strength, and Beauty, the production's brilliant cast is led by **Joseph Mydell** as Everyman.

> *"Adrian Noble's production has 'RSC major success' stamped all over it."*
>
> —Observer (London)

One of Shakespeare's late plays, ***Cymbeline*** is a wonderfully tall fairytale, loaded with many of the bard's favorite ingredients. It is a romantic story filled with improbable plot twists, and **Adrian Noble, artistic director of the RSC,** brings a welcome simplicity to the production.

Turning away from the traditional European setting, designer **Anthony Ward** draws inspiration from Japanese Kabuki to create a visually stunning production employing kimonos, gongs, and an ingenious billowing white drape.

Cymbeline

Adrian Noble

Cymbeline
by William Shakespeare

Royal Shakespeare Company
Directed by **Adrian Noble**

BAM Opera House
June 3—6 at 7:30pm;
June 6 at 2pm
Tickets: $50, 35, 20

Everyman
Anonymous

Royal Shakespeare Company
Directed by **Kathryn Hunter**
and **Marcello Magni**

BAM Majestic Theater
June 2—6 at 7:30pm
June 6 at 2pm; June 7 at 3pm
Tickets: $50, 35, 20

Shakespeare at BAM
Multiple sessions at different BAM venues

May 30 at 11am; 1:30pm & 5:30pm
May 31 at 11am & 1:30pm
Tickets: $8 per session

Produced by BAM's Education and Humanities department and co-presented with The Simon H. Rifkind Center for the Humanities, CCNY; Department of Culture and Communication, NYU; The Shakespeare Globe Centre (USA); Works & Process at the Guggenheim; Theatre for a New Audience; Brooklyn Botanic Garden; Thirteen / WNET; National Actors Theatre

The RSC's season at BAM is augmented by a series of humanities events that feature performers, scholars, artists, and directors fro all aspects of the theater. Events include symposia, open rehearsals, interviews, and screenings.

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RSC at BAM Calendar of Events

May

4—6 RSC Choices Workshop
10:30am & 1:30pm

15—17 Thirteen / WNET:
Shakespeare~No Holds Bard
More than 22 hours of Shakespeareana with classic films, stage performances, and documentaries Friday 9pm through Sunday. Includes Zeffirelli's "Romeo and Juliet;" Kurosawa's "Throne of Blood;" Welle's "Chimes at Midnight."

18 Gala Dinner & Performance
Hammerstein Ballroom
Manhattan, 7pm

21 Hamlet 7:30pm
22 Hamlet 7:30pm
23 Hamlet 2 & 7:30pm
24 Hamlet 3pm
26 Hamlet 7:30pm
Henry VIII 7:30pm

27 Krapp's Last Tape
6pm—*Sold Out*
Hamlet 7:30pm
Henry VIII 7:30pm

28 Krapp's Last Tape
6pm—*Sold Out*
Hamlet 7:30pm
Henry VIII 7:30pm

29 Krapp's Last Tape 6pm—*Sold Out*
Hamlet 7:30pm
Henry VIII 7:30pm

30 Hamlet 7:30pm
Henry VIII 2 & 7:30pm

31 Henry VIII 3pm

June

2 Everyman 7:30pm

3 Cymbeline 7:30pm
Everyman 7:30pm

4 Cymbeline 7:30pm
Everyman 7:30pm

5 Cymbeline 7:30pm
Everyman 7:30pm

6 Cymbeline 2 & 7:30pm
Everyman 2 & 7:30pm

7 Everyman 3pm

May 30—31 Shakespeare at BAM

Session I: *RSC Members Table Talk About Shakespeare* 11am—*Sold Out*

Session II: *Cicely Berry and Theatre for a New Audience's American Directors Project*, 11am

Session III: *Contemporary Artists and the Bard*, 1:30pm

Session IV: *(Re)Building Shakespeare's Globe*, 1:30pm

Session V: *John Barton's Playing Shakespeare, USA* 5:30pm—*Sold Out*

Session VI: *Then and Now- Shakespeare's Audiences*, 11am

Session VII: *See Session II*, 11am

Session VIII: *Shakespeare's Secret Garden*, 1:30pm, BAM & Brooklyn Botanic Garden

Session IX: *Performing History: Shakespeare's Reality*, 1:30pm

All events are at BAM unless otherwise noted.
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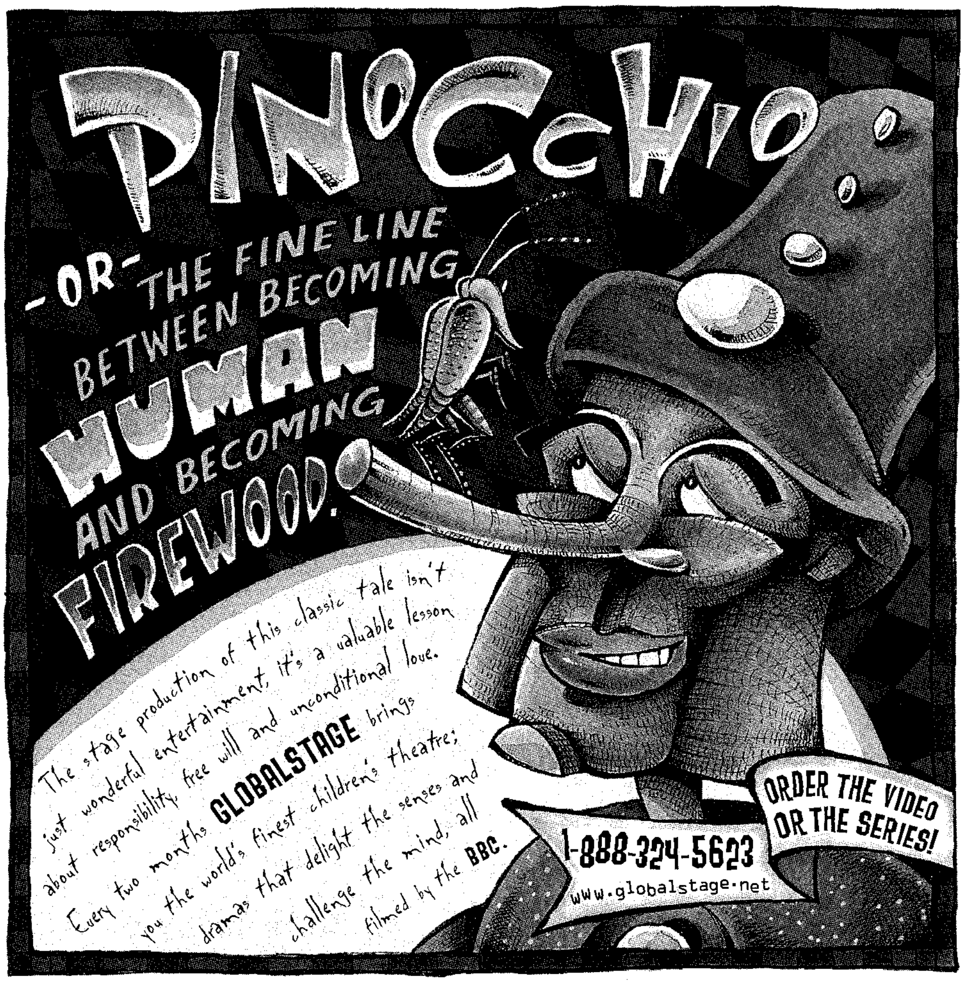
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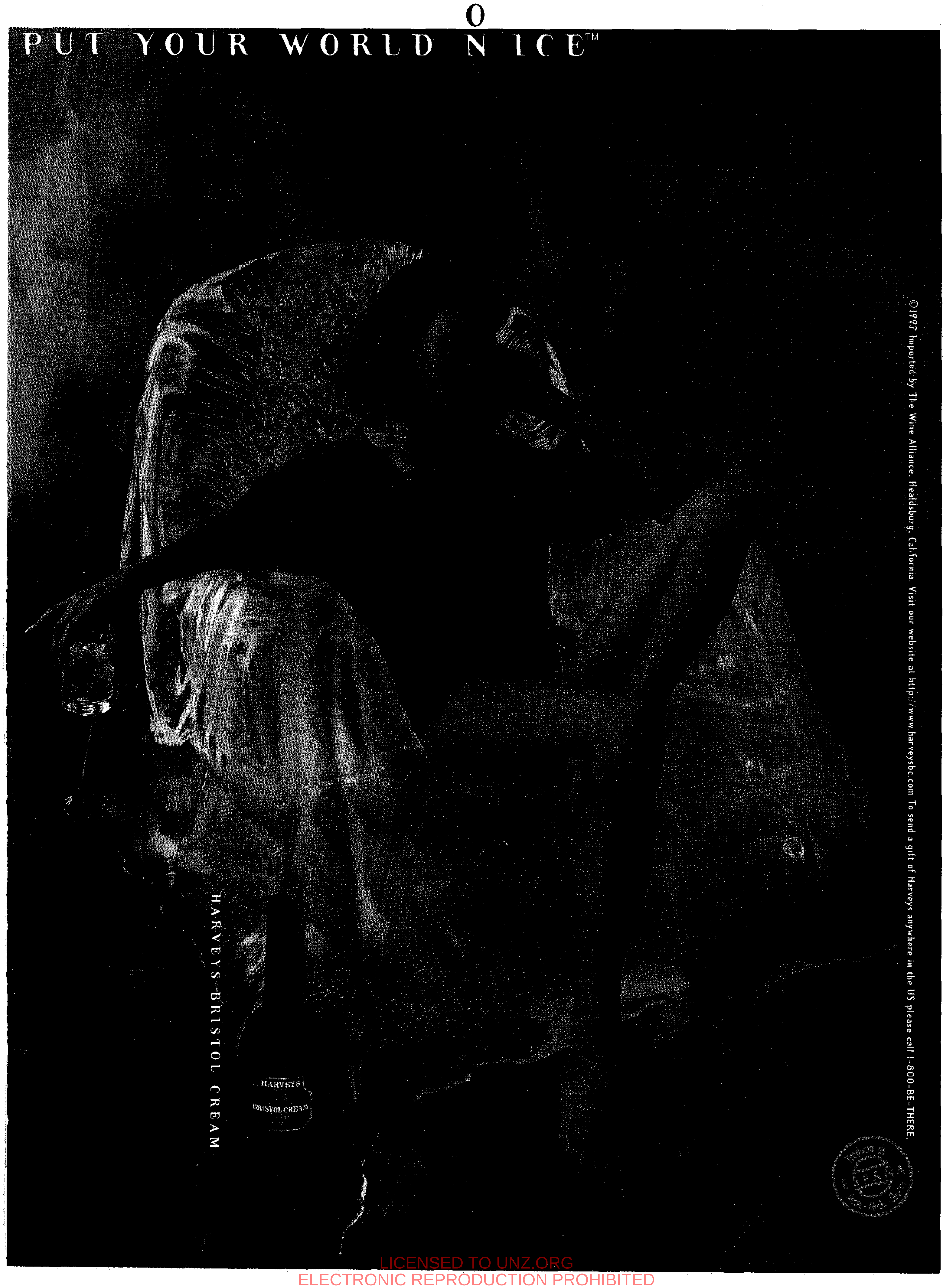
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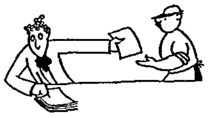
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

INK

Can the Bertelsmann deal take publishing back to its roots?



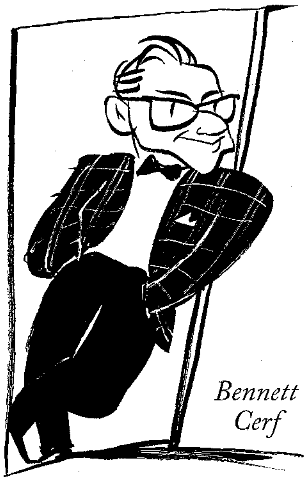
On the morning last week that the purchase of Random House by Bertelsmann was announced, I happened to pass the office of my colleague Bob Loomis and noticed the framed copy of the Random House interoffice phone directory for 1958 that Bob keeps on his bookshelf. The directory is about the size of a postal card and lists some ninety names, including Bob's and mine along with those of Bennett Cerf and his partner Donald Klopfer, the founders of Random House, whose offices were then on the parlor floor of the old Villard mansion, on Madison and Fiftieth. We occupied the north wing. The Archdiocese owned the central portion, which is now the entrance of the Palace Hotel, as well as the south wing, which now houses Le Cirque 2000.

Loomis and I joined Random House in the late nineteen-fifties. Though we took our publishing responsibilities seriously, we did not think of ourselves as businessmen but as caretakers of a tradition, like London tailors or collectors of Chinese porcelain. Bennett Cerf set the tone, and it was his habit to run from office to office sharing the jokes he had just heard over the phone from his Hollywood friends. Several times a day Bennett interrupted meetings between editors and authors in this fashion. Some authors were delighted. But I remember an afternoon when a baffled W. H. Auden asked if we could finish our conversation at Schrafft's across the street. This was, I believe, the last time he set foot in the Random House offices.

For me in those years, book publishing seemed more a sport than a business—a sport that required skill and strict attention to the rules, especially the rule that we had to make enough money to stay in the game. But if we wanted to make real money in a real business we knew that we should forget about afternoons with Auden, Faulkner, and Dr. Seuss and go down to Wall Street. But this was unthinkable. It was always a pleasure when one of our books became a best-seller, but what counted more was a book that promised to become a permanent part of the culture. Random House published many books that became both.

The editor's job was different then from what it is now. Now layer upon layer of marketing specialists, sales executives, and business managers separate the editor from the bookseller. At the Villard mansion, we made these publishing decisions ourselves. For years, I would begin my day in the mailroom opening orders from booksellers, so that I had the feel of the marketplace literally at my fingertips.

That time was magical and we never expected it to end, even after Bennett and Donald took the company public, acquired Knopf, and, in 1966, sold out to RCA. By the mid-seventies the publishing industry had changed profoundly. The old downtown neighborhoods where booksellers had once rented inexpensive space and knew their customers by name had largely vanished. Readers now bought their books in mall chain stores. The bookseller in Pittsburgh or Portland whom Loomis or I might once have called to recommend a first novel had been out of business for years. Publishers now spoke to their customers through marketing specialists doing their best to fit the increasingly undifferentiated product supplied by the editors into the still less differentiated slots provided by the retail chains. Many worthy titles couldn't be fitted to these new circumstances at all and disappeared. In recent years the mall shops specializing in best-sellers have been largely replaced by so-called superstores, with much larger inventories of books. But the link between writer and marketplace which had once been the editor's function has all but vanished.



Bennett Cerf

The Random House phone book is now the size of a small city directory. Loomis and I are still listed, but after forty years nearly everything else about book publishing has changed. What had been a craft is now an irrational accretion of improvisational adjustments to historic accidents, a largely fossilized organism that can no longer be deconstructed. Its future depends on how well its remaining energies can be directed toward new technological possibilities.

I am delighted to say that these possibilities already exist. The widespread distribution of printed books via the Internet is a reality a mere two and a half years after the appearance of Amazon.com. The eventual shape of Internet bookselling is not yet fully evident, but it is evident enough to foreshadow a much more direct—and economical—link between writer and reader than has existed in modern times. The choice of a career in book publishing may seem bleak at the moment, but if I were starting out today I might give it a try. To publish a book that may make the world a little more intelligible or decent can be almost as satisfying as writing one. And soon it might just be possible to carry on this work with even greater confidence than Loomis and I shared forty years ago. —Jason Epstein

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

SPRING ICON REPORT

Do the rookies know how Willie Mays played?

BASEBALL reopens this week, with the fresh schedule reviving hopes everywhere—well, maybe not in Montreal—but the icon season is over. Once again, the spring-training camps in Florida and Arizona featured the customary assortment of aching arms and bulked-up pectorals, and the reappearance on the field of some of the pastime's most august figures and uniform numbers: leathery Hall of Famers and legends, back in the sun as invitees for a brief tour as spring coaches. Fan dads leaning on the chain-link fences at the Cardinals' new complex, in Jupiter, Florida, could point out Lou Brock to their kids, right over there, talking to Red Schoendienst and—is that No. 45 . . . yes!—Bob Gibson. On a back field at Port St. Lucie, coach Mookie Wilson (a thousand kittens were named Mookie in the summer of 1986, when the Mets were driving for their pennant) smiled engagingly, pointing to his knees and his hips as he demonstrated leadoffs from first base to a handful of Mets rookies; one of them was his son, Preston Wilson, who might just turn into a legend himself a few springs down the line.

Out at the Giants' Scottsdale Stadium, in Arizona, Vida Blue sat cross-legged in his familiar camp chair, just in front of the stands, now and then extending a hand back over his shoulder to accept an unseen fan's pen and program; and the man indoors, sitting at the same southeast corner of the same clubhouse table, was Willie Mays. He is sixty-six now, and his seamed, heavy face hasn't much say hey left in it, but he is never without company. Visiting writers and sportscasters, stopping by to pay their respects in the morning, have found that they share a wish to grab some of the youngest and newest Giants, chattering over there in front of their lockers, and say, "Do you have any *idea* how this man played?"

Mays, in self-protection, has developed a selective memory, and conversational openers from his visitors about his celebrated overhead catch against Vic Wertz in the 1954 World Series or the four-homer game in 1961 no longer light up the Proustian hot stove. Nor do knowing references to any of the other lifetime six hundred and sixty dingers bring much response—not the homer that beat Warren Spahn, 1–0, in the fifteenth inning (eye-roll, with incomprehensible murmur), or the monster blow against the Astros' Claude Raymond after Mays had fouled off thirteen consecutive fastballs ("Grmpf. How'd you know about that?"). This year, though, a visiting senior writer from back East got lucky when he brought up an early Maysian catch and throw against the Dodgers—the Billy Cox play.

"Damn!" Mays cried excitedly. "You saw that? You were there?"

Yes, the writer had been there—as a fan at the Polo Grounds. "August, 1951," he said. "Cox was the base runner at third. You caught the ball running full tilt toward right, turned in midair, and threw him out at the plate. You threw before you could get turned around—let the ball go with your back to the plate. The throw went to the catcher on the fly—it must have been Westrum—and he tagged Cox out, sliding."

"You got it!" Mays said. "I've been sayin' this for a long time, and nobody here believes me." He was kidding, of course, but his voice had come up at last: almost the old, high Willie piping. "Now, tell 'em how it was."

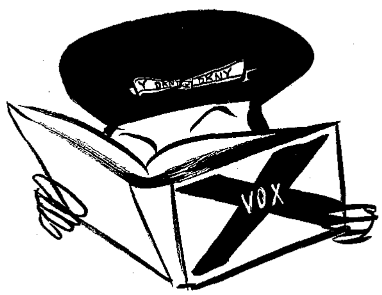
I told it again—it was easy because I'd never seen such a play, before or since—and, as I did, it seemed to me that Willie Mays and I could still see the long, curving flight of the white ball through the afternoon light, bang into the big mitt, and the slide and the amazing out, and together remember the expanding moment when the staring players on the field and those just emerging from the dugouts, and the shouting fans, and maybe even the startled twenty-year-old rookie center fielder himself, now retrieving his fallen cap from the grass, understood that something new and electric had just begun to happen to baseball. —ROGER ANGELL

READING LIST

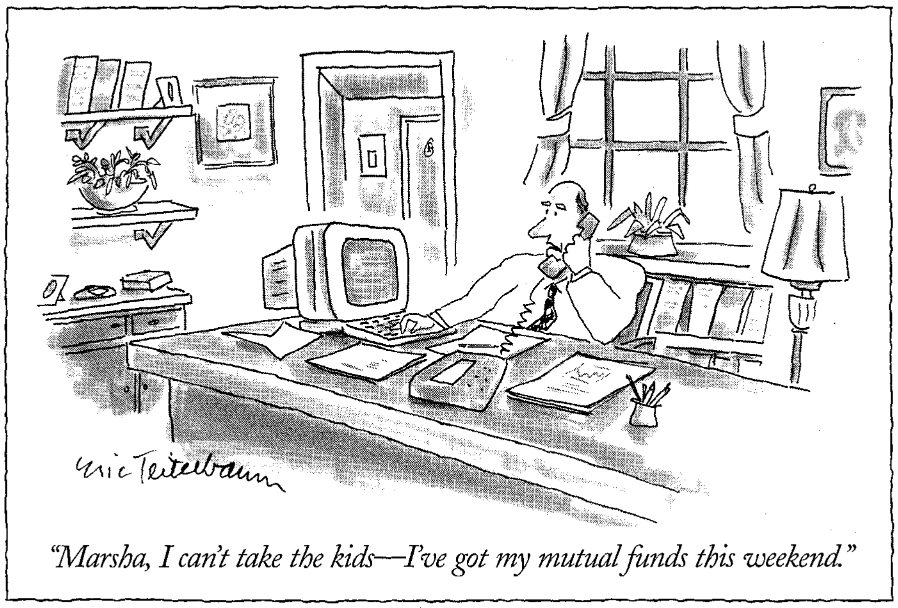
Ken Starr reminds us that the world of books is alive and well.

FOR a while there last week, things were looking grim for books and book lovers, what with Random House being sold to the Germans like a truckful of French cheese. But then one Kenneth Starr, a man who bulks ever larger in our country's cultural life, stepped in. By subpoenaing the records of Monica Lewinsky's book purchases, the Whitewater independent counsel not only showed what a very special prosecutor he is but also reminded us that reading is fundamental, that books are an indispensable part of any big-time scandal, and that the neighborhood bookstore is still a pillar of American life.

Last point first. Washington's Kramerbooks—where Monica picked up Nicholson Baker's "Vox" and a backpack's worth of other volumes, whose titles will presumably be revealed, with a Perry Mason flourish, at some future trial or impeachment hearing—earned a footnote in retailing history by being perhaps the first bookstore to combine itself with a café. (Nowadays, of course, a bookstore without at least an espresso machine is like a fish without a bicycle.) Thanks partly to Kramerbooks—its full name is Kramerbooks & Afterwords, and its ambience is comfy and youthful—the capital's current imbroglio is proving to be above average from a literary point of view. "Vox" is a racy book (it's about phone sex), but it's a work of literary fiction, not a self-help tome. It deserves a place in the same library, if not on the same shelf, as "Leaves of Grass," the President's gift to the divine Ms. M (and, many years before, to the future Mrs. C). All this is a big step up from "The Exorcist," the signature book of the Clarence Thomas horror show, to say nothing of the Long Dong Silver videotapes (allegedly rented from a video store across Dupont Circle from Kramerbooks). "Vox" and "Leaves of Grass" put Flytrap (as *Slate* has dubbed the scandal) in a class with the Simpson trial (O.J. requested that the novels of Cormac McCarthy be brought to him in his cell) and the Unabomber case (which highlighted Conrad's "The Secret Agent," a copy of which was found in Kaczynski's cabin), and far ahead of the Oklahoma City bombing case (which provided free publicity for the despicable "Turner Diaries").



The real test, of course, will come



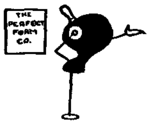
"Marsha, I can't take the kids—I've got my mutual funds this weekend."

when the books about the scandal begin flooding the market. Watergate is the gold standard, having produced such works of merit as J. Anthony Lukas's "Nightmare" and the two Woodstein page-turners. It stands to reason that the current scandal will generate lighter fare. So far, the book proposals of Linda Tripp and Kathleen Willey have gone nowhere. Like the unlooked-for promotion of Nicholson Baker and Walt Whitman, this must be counted a gain for literature.

—HENDRIK HERTZBERG

RAG TRADE

An eccentric Londoner brings deep thoughts to a New York cashmere house.


THE PERFECT FORM CO.

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN was called into service during the London fashion collections last month, when the designer Hussein Chalayan left on each chair at his show a scrap of paper bearing the philosopher's statement "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence." It was apparently a reference to Chalayan's distaste for explaining himself, as well as a comment on a favorite theme—the silencing and control of women, to which, it appears, he is opposed. The models wore red plastic screens in front of their mouths, in case anyone missed the point. Last fall, Chalayan's show was equally thought-provoking: he sent a series of models down the runway naked, except for chadors that ranged from chin length to floor length.

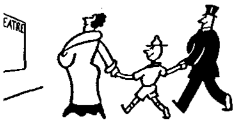
"That was about the whole idea of nurture versus nature, and defining your territory by what you wear," Chalayan told me recently at the Fifth Avenue headquarters of the clothing company Tse, which specializes in cashmere and which recently hired him as a design consultant. "For me, the idea of the nude is like nature, and being totally covered up is like death. And inevitably it becomes a statement on women's roles as well." If Versace did it, it would simply be girls getting naked.

Chalayan, who moved to London from Cyprus at the age of twelve, shows his first collection for Tse in New York this week. "My work for Tse is basically very clean, with very graphic lines," he said. "I like to stick with certain things rather than move around too much. People expect something new each time, because they don't realize how valuable ideas are."

So valuable, in fact, that they can't even be bought. Anyone wanting a Chalayan chador is out of luck: they were made only for the show. —REBECCA MEAD

THE BOARDS

Was "The Capeman" just in the wrong place at the wrong time?



LAST week, while a shockingly expensive and hugely hyped movie, "Titanic," won eleven Oscars, a shockingly expensive and hugely hyped Broadway musical, "The Capeman," went dark. The market settled their fates, and that was that. But there was enough that was fascinating about "The Capeman," with music by Paul Simon and a book by Mr. Simon and Derek Walcott, to make one want to pause beside its Broadway grave.

Audiences dwindled as the hundred-and-twenty-seven-day run ended. But many who did turn up were moved and unsettled by the show. For Latinos especially, "The Capeman"—with a cast that included the Latin music stars Ruben Blades, Marc Anthony, and Ednita Nazario—was a revelation. At a recent matinée at the Marquis Theatre (a sprawling, gaudy venue that was utterly wrong for this production), I sat next to a young woman, born in Puerto Rico, who was seeing the show for the third time. "I brought my friend," she said. "I love this show. He got it all right, the music—it's like my childhood. Sometimes, afterward, they come out and sign autographs." (By "they" she meant Mr. Blades and Mr. Anthony, who played the older and younger Salvador Agrón, the real-life Capeman. In the summer of 1959, Agrón murdered two teen-agers in Hell's Kitchen and spent most of the rest of his life in prison—a problematic subject that Simon and Walcott never quite mastered.) The autographs were mostly for the high-school students who cheered from the balcony, and who, my neighbor said, were having the novel experience of seeing a Broadway show that actually had something to do with their lives. Then the curtain went up, and Mr. Blades and Mr. Anthony sang "Born in Puerto Rico" ("came here when I was a child"), and they were hooked.

If you watched "The Capeman" in its final days, it wasn't hard to see why it failed, but it wasn't a stretch to see how it might someday succeed, either. Even critics who attacked the show with a savagery that it didn't deserve conceded that no melodies more beautiful were to be heard on Broadway. There was a scene in Act I where the audience looked up at a patch of night sky from the weirdly angled perspective of a housing-project courtyard. There Marc Anthony and the cast sing (and dance) the doo-woppy "Satin Summer Nights," and you think, This is how it all could have been. Then you imagine a proper afterlife for "The Capeman," as an American folk opera, rather than a musical. You picture it reborn, revived in other times, other places, in high-school auditoriums, barrios, Off Broadway—a kind of clumsy heartfelt masterwork that will undoubtedly keep trying to make sense of itself.—JEFFREY FRANK

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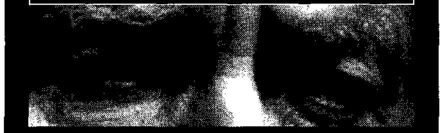

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ANNALS OF LAW

CLINTON'S OTHER PURSUER

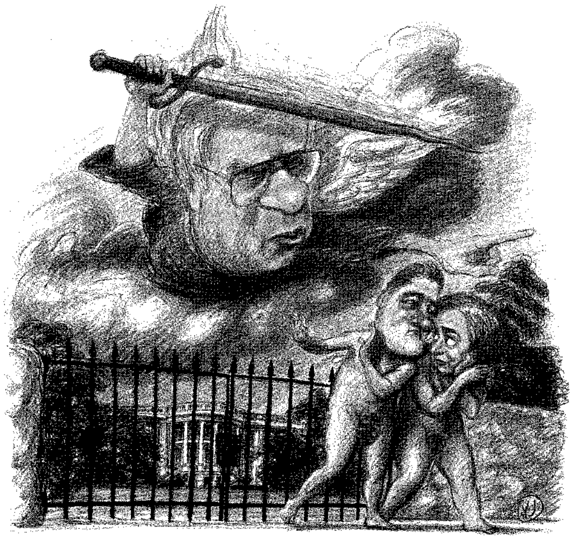
Kenneth Starr's deputy believes the worst.

BY JEFFREY TOOBIN

ONE of the eulogists at the funeral of James McDougal, on March 13th, was a prosecutor who had helped put the Whitewater defendant in the federal prison where he died last month. Speaking before about a hundred and fifty mourners on a hillside in the southwestern Arkansas town of Arkadelphia, the prosecutor, W. Hickman Ewing, Jr., who is Kenneth Starr's chief deputy in Little Rock, said that he felt "like somebody hit me in the stomach" when he heard that McDougal had died. Starr's office had convicted McDougal, a former Arkansas banker, of fraud and conspiracy in 1996, but afterward McDougal, who had all along protested his innocence, recanted, admitted that he was guilty, and, most important, implicated his former business partner Bill Clinton in a criminal scheme. McDougal could have been sentenced to eighty-three years for his crimes, but, because of his coöperation with Starr's office—in the past eighteen months, he had spoken with Ewing as often as three times a week—won a reduction to only three years.

"Jim McDougal became very transparent," Ewing said at the funeral. "I mean, there are some things that I don't think he really wanted to come out. But Jim McDougal, at one point, said, 'I'm tired of certain things.'" Ewing then led a prayer. "Lord, you created him as a very unique person," the prosecutor said. "You knit him together in his mother's womb those many years ago. Now he's gone. Lord, we thank you for the joy that he brought to people's lives."

Ewing, at the age of fifty-five, displays the coolness of a Southern lawman rather than the righteousness of a country preacher, but he's probably as practiced in pulpits as he is in courtrooms—and he has spent plenty of time in both. Though short of six feet, he's kept the stocky build of his high-school days as a four-sport athlete. He's got a full head of snowy-white hair, and a demeanor that suggests that he spends little time agonizing. And, after three and a half years of investigating the many-faceted scandal known as Whitewater, Ewing has apparently decided that the President of the United States and his wife are crooks.



Hickman Ewing has apparently decided that the President and his wife are crooks.

VICTOR JUHASZ

The Starr investigation has been portrayed as a personal contest between the Independent Counsel and the President, but Hickman Ewing may be the one who really takes it personally. He and Clinton, after all, can be seen as opposite generational archetypes. If Clinton is the Ivy League-educated, draft-avoiding, philandering liberal who found success on the national stage, Ewing is the born-again, Vietnam-vet conservative whose current assignment in Little Rock represents his first legal job outside Memphis.

"It's kind of funny when you think about it," Eric Jaso, who worked with Ewing for two years as a prosecutor in

Starr's Little Rock office, says. "People say that Starr has no experience and is too aggressive, and so he ought to turn over the investigation to career prosecutors like Hick. But, if you think that Ken Starr is out to get the President, Hick Ewing is not a moderating influence, that's for sure."

Starr was appointed Independent Counsel on August 5, 1994, and Ewing was one of the first assistants he hired. ("Hick is a great man," Starr told me recently.) Ewing quickly impressed—and occasionally surprised—his new colleagues with his approach to law enforcement. One former Starr prosecutor recalls, "Most prosecutors at least say that they come to things with open minds, but Hick says that he presumes that a crime has been committed and his job is to proceed as if there is criminal conduct and then be convinced otherwise. Hick doesn't undertake an investigation with the supposition that the people are innocent. It struck me when he said it." The attitude might have been somewhat less surprising in a United States Attorney's office, where prosecutors are often presented with known crimes to solve. But independent counsels are assigned, in the first instance, to determine whether a crime has occurred. Ewing had shown contempt for this part of the Starr office's mission. "I'm a prosecutor, not a report writer," he often told his colleagues. Ewing told me that he did not begin a case with a presumption of criminality, but he also said, "After you've been doing this kind of work for ten, fifteen, twenty years, it doesn't take too long to determine whether somebody has committed a crime. You draw your preliminary conclusions, and then you shut this down or you proceed. We proceeded."

WHEN Ewing joined the staff, Starr had just succeeded Robert B. Fiske, Jr., who had been appointed to investigate matters relating to the Clintons' investment in the Whitewater development, in northern Arkansas. The prosecutor's office, however, had also been given a broad mandate to pursue cases that arose out of its initial inquiries. Ewing took over one of the most promising spinoff cases that had been developed by Fiske: determining whether Webster Hubbell, who had served as Associate Attorney General, had bilked his former employer, the Rose Law Firm, and its clients of close to five hundred thousand dollars. Focussing on Hubbell was a typical first step in a white-collar-crime investigation; experienced prosecutors often focus on vulnerable insiders who can be persuaded to turn on a higher-up. Hubbell, who practiced law with Hillary Clinton and played golf with Bill Clinton, was quickly found to be vulnerable. The evidence against him was so overwhelming that, on December 6, 1994, he had little choice but to plead guilty.

Hubbell was probably the closest Presidential confidant since Watergate to plead guilty and coöperate in an investigation of the White House. Ewing led the debriefing of Hubbell, and, he told me, their sessions got off to a relaxed start. "When I had my first meeting with Webb Hubbell after he pleaded guilty, I asked him who were the people he had talked to when he resigned from the Justice Department, and he told me Mickey Kantor"—a close Clinton adviser and his first-term trade representative. "So I told Webb I had a Mickey Kantor story for him. Kantor was a senior at Vanderbilt when I was a freshman, and because freshmen couldn't play varsity ball in those days we used to play against each other in scrimmages. After he graduated, I and another fellow succeeded him as the shortstop. I'd never had any contact with him since then, but after it came out that I was on this case he said to a mutual friend, 'Tell Hick I was always a better player than he was.' And fair is fair, he was." But, while Hubbell admitted his own misdeeds, he steadfastly insisted that he knew of no crimes committed by either Clinton.

In western Tennessee, Ewing had specialized in bringing down entire corrupt organizations, including the pardon-sellers and scam-runners who surrounded (and included) former Governor Ray Blanton.The Hubbell case established criminality in the Clintons' inner circle, and Ewing thought that Hubbell was lying to protect the Clintons. "On the important things, Hick did not believe him," a member of Starr's team says. And Hubbell told me recently, "I keep reading in the papers how they say I didn't coöperate, and I wasn't forthcoming. I disagree."

Hubbell's predicament led investigators to another member of the Presi-

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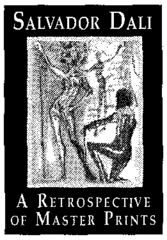

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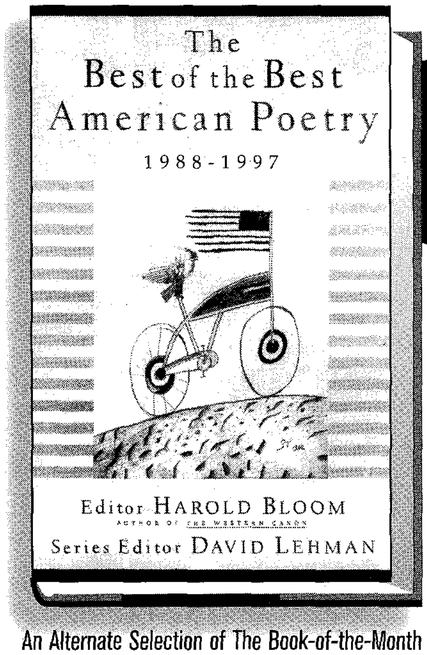

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dent's circle. After the guilty plea, it was revealed that Vernon Jordan, one of Clinton's closest friends, had done Hubbell an important favor: he helped him get a hundred-thousand-dollar-a-year retainer for consulting work from MacAndrews & Forbes, the New York holding company that owns Revlon. Starr's office has since tried to find out whether Jordan arranged a payment of hush money to Hubbell, much as, more recently, the Independent Counsel tried to find out whether Jordan helped Monica Lewinsky, the former White House intern, in return for favorable testimony in the Paula Jones case. Jordan has denied any wrongdoing.

Some of Ewing's colleagues on Starr's staff believed that Hubbell had also been reticent on another subject: the relationship between Hillary Clinton and Vincent Foster. Like both Mrs. Clinton and Hubbell, Foster was a partner in the Rose firm who had come to Washington to work in the new Administration. Foster's suicide, on July 20, 1993, unsettled the White House; investigators began attempting to learn more about documents, including the Clintons' personal legal papers, that had been taken from Foster's office soon after his death. "Right after the suicide, there was all this phone traffic involving Hillary and her staff and documents that wound up in the Clintons' living quarters," a former senior investigator on Starr's staff says. "The press always thought that they were going through his office to get documents about Whitewater out of there. But I don't think Hillary was concerned about Whitewater at all."

It was no secret that Mrs. Clinton regarded Foster as a trusted friend, but some on Starr's staff had come to believe the extraordinary—and entirely unproved—theory that Mrs. Clinton had had an affair with Foster, and that her chief concern was keeping it secret. According to this former investigator's scenario, the White House was "worried that he was going to leave something behind relating to it—a suicide note, saying something like 'We can't sleep together anymore.' But they couldn't even acknowledge that that was what they were worried about."

This sort of fanciful speculation had surfaced previously, but mostly in the more extreme elements of the Clintonhating press. Ewing has distanced himself from this hypothesis. Still, what the former investigator says suggests that some members of Starr's team had an interest in the Clintons' sex lives long before the Lewinsky investigation, and demonstrates the depth of the prosecutors' suspicion about their two top targets.

"The guy at the other end of the bar would like to buy himself another drink."

Not surprisingly, Ewing was eager to question the First Lady. On July 22, 1995, he, Starr, and three other investigators questioned both the President and Mrs. Clinton—in the Treaty Room, which is in the White House residence—about their Whitewater investment and other matters. "We talked to him for about three hours and her for two," a person who was present says. "We questioned her about her legal work for Madison Guaranty"—the failed savings-and-loan company linked to Whitewater—"and about Foster. We were all convinced that she was a liar—on all topics. The principal way she lied was 'I don't recall.' "

Ewing, according to his colleagues, was particularly skeptical about Mrs. Clinton's responses. "The bee in the bonnet," a Starr former investigator told me, is Ewing's belief that "he watched her lie under oath repeatedly." Then, on January 5, 1996, the White House announced that it had located Hillary Clinton's Rose Law Firm billing records for Madison Guaranty. The records had been subpoenaed almost two years earlier, and the White House never explained how they had eluded detection for so long.

After the sudden discovery of these records, Starr insisted that Mrs. Clinton testify before the Washington grand jury, and she did so on January 26, 1996. Ewing travelled to Washington for the occasion, and participated in the questioning of the First Lady—"one of the nine white male prosecutors who were in there with her," a person who watched the lawyers enter the grand-jury room in the Washington federal court recalls. The details of her testimony remain secret, but Mrs. Clinton has said that her work for Madison Guaranty was minimal, and that she can remember very little about it.

Ewing didn't believe Mrs. Clinton this time, either. "Hick came to a sincere belief that both Bill and Hillary were lying under oath in a criminal investigation, and that had a profound effect on his feelings," a former colleague of Ewing's told me. Ewing went as far as to draft a preliminary indictment of the First Lady for crimes relating to false statements and obstruction of justice. But others on Starr's staff were not convinced that a case could be made against Mrs. Clinton, and the document never progressed beyond this early stage. So, thwarted by Hubbell and stymied by Mrs. Clinton, Ewing tried another way to get inside what he believed was a conspiracy.

"THERE were really three people who had the keys, if you will," a former Starr prosecutor told me. "One of them was Vince Foster. Another is Webb Hubbell, and the last one is Bruce Lindsey"—a top White House aide and longtime Arkansas friend of the Clintons. "Those names pop up wherever you look. These were the people the Clintons turned to to clean up their messes." Foster was dead; Hubbell did not implicate the Clintons; and the Whitewater trial of two Arkansas bankers—Herby Branscum, Jr., and Robert M. Hill—constituted Ewing's best attempt to get to Lindsey.

Branscum and Hill were charged with the misapplication of bank funds and concealing cash transactions related to the Clinton gubernatorial campaign in 1990. At their trial, Starr named Lindsey, who was the campaign treasurer, as an unindicted co-conspirator; the defendants called the President as a witness for the defense. The high point of the trial came on July 7, 1996, when lawyers in the case decamped to Washington to see if Clinton could stand up to Hickman Ewing's cross-examination.

Two tables had been set up in the Map Room of the White House on that Sunday afternoon. Clinton sat in a chair in the space between them, and Ewing, the lead prosecutor in the trial, stood at a rostrum as he questioned him.

The defense had used the President mainly as a character witness, with Clinton testifying about his long associations with Branscum and Hill in Arkansas politics and government. Ewing went after Clinton with a vengeance, and on subjects far afield from the relatively narrow issues in the trial. He forced the President to examine a long series of contribution checks to his 1990 campaign and explain what he remembered about them. Considering how much time had passed, Clinton gave remarkably detailed answers about his contributors, down to the names of their spouses and children.

Indeed, Clinton seemed almost to enjoy the exchange. When Ewing asked him about "backwards" check marks that had been made on certain documents, the President responded, "I'm left-handed, so it's not backwards to me, but it's the way I do checks." At another point, Ewing referred to a bank deposit of forty-three thousand six hundred and eighty dollars, and asked, "If there were approximately fourteen to fifteen thousand dollars raised . . . would that be roughly a little over a third of this amount that you all deposited?"

Clinton quickly ran through the numbers in his head, and replied, "If it were fifteen, it would be a little over a third. If it were fourteen, it would be a little under a third." A person who watched the testimony recalls, "He seemed so proud of having caught Hick and corrected his math. He was like the child prodigy who gets the answer right in class."

Ewing suggested that on the eve of the 1986 gubernatorial election one of the defendants had essentially paid Clinton off with contributions in order to line up a state job.

In reply, Clinton used his superior knowledge of Arkansas politics. "I didn't get to go to Perry County very often," he said. "It was one of the smallest counties in the state." Thus, it wouldn't be surprising if he had done both politicking and fund-raising on one of his infrequent visits.

All lawyers want to end an examination with a flourish. After noting that Clinton had appointed the defendant, Hill, to a state job, Ewing asked, "Did he continue to support you both politically, financially, as far as contributions are concerned?"

"That's right," Clinton replied.

"I take it you continued to remain grateful to anybody that supported you," Ewing said.

"I did."

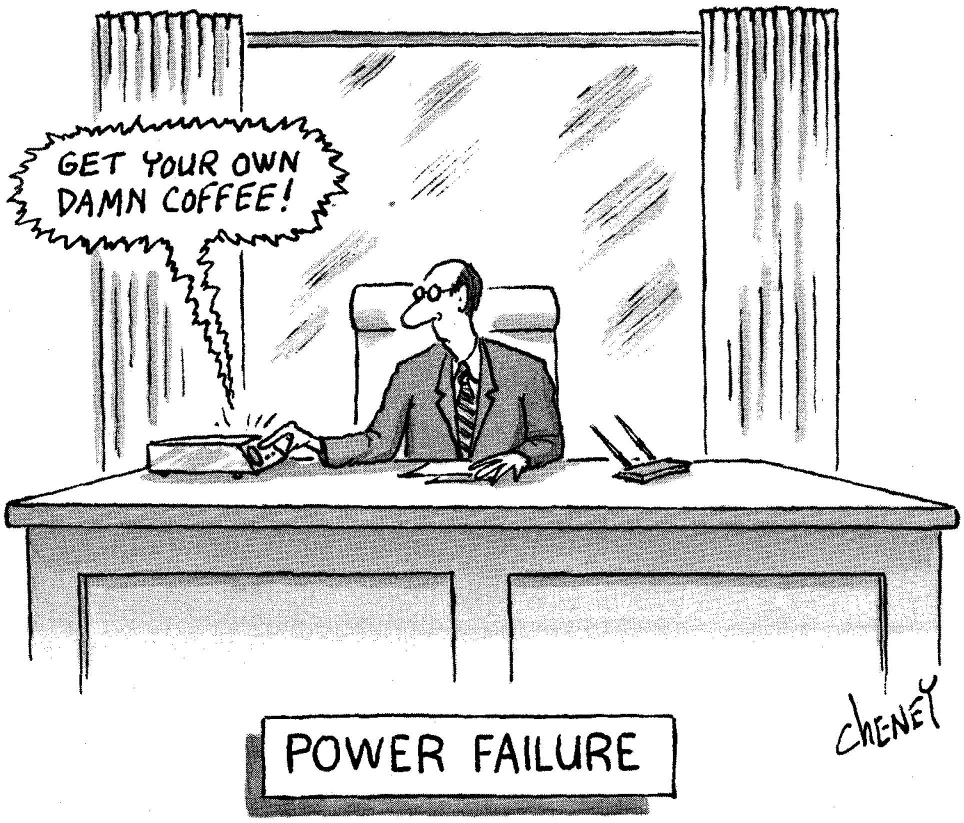
The theory behind the prosecution of Branscum and Hill was apparent to almost everyone involved: once convicted, the bankers would turn on Bruce Lindsey, and Lindsey, to save himself, would finally tell the truth about all the "messes" he had cleaned up for the President. As Ewing likes to put it, "Today's defendant is tomorrow's witness." But the plan fell apart: the jury failed to convict Branscum and Hill.

PROSECUTORS are suspicious by nature, but Ewing's approach to investigations in general, and to the Clinton case in particular, suggests a dark view of politicians.

The prosecutor's father, William Hickman Ewing, Sr., was a legendary sports figure in Shelby County, the longtime football and baseball coach at South Side High School in Memphis. "Hick grew up in a sports background, and the competitiveness of it and the hardness of it had a big effect on him," John Bramlett, an old friend of his, told me. Bramlett played high-school football against Ewing, went on to a professional football career with the Miami Dolphins and the Denver Broncos, and is now a travelling lay minister. Ewing attended Vanderbilt on a Navy R.O.T.C. scholarship and, after he graduated, in 1964, was commissioned as an ensign and served on active duty for five years, rising to the rank of lieutenant and commanding a small patrol boat that ran along the coast of Vietnam. While young Hickman was in the Navy, his father's life turned sour. In late 1964, he was indicted for embezzlement and pleaded guilty the following year to stealing more than forty-three thousand dollars from the county government. He spent eighteen months in prison while his son was away at war. Ewing says that he found it difficult to discuss the matter for many years, even though Ewing, Sr., following his release from prison, resumed his coaching career.

Adversaries have often suggested that Ewing's career represents a form of revenge against politicians. His father's problems began after he got mixed up with politics: in 1954, as a reward for his coaching success, the head of the local Democratic machine, E. H. (Boss) Crump, arranged a job for him as the court clerk of Shelby County. Ewing, Jr., denies that there is a connection, and in fact has been known to compare Webb Hubbell's fate to his father's. In 1995, Ewing told the Memphis *Commercial-Appeal* that he empathized with Hubbell's thirteen-year-old daughter, who cried when her father was sentenced.

Shortly after Ewing's father was released from prison, Ewing enrolled in a local law school. He found an internship at the United States Attorney's office in Memphis and worked there for almost twenty years. There were only about half a dozen prosecutors when Ewing joined the office, in 1971, and it was then led by the charismatic Tom Turley. Ewing and other prosecutors from that era make a point of noting that they prosecuted both Democrats and Republicans, and that any sort of political partisanship was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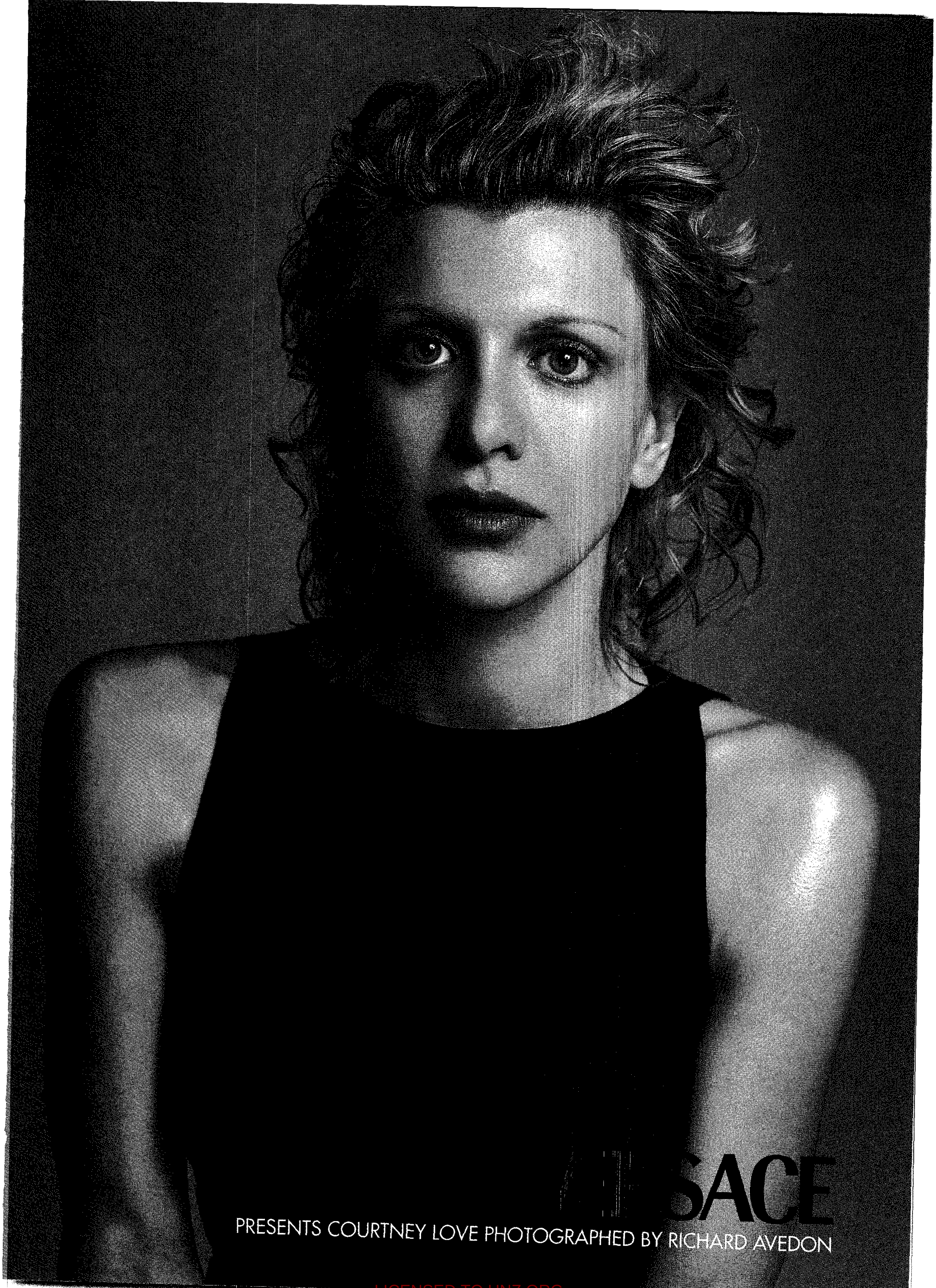
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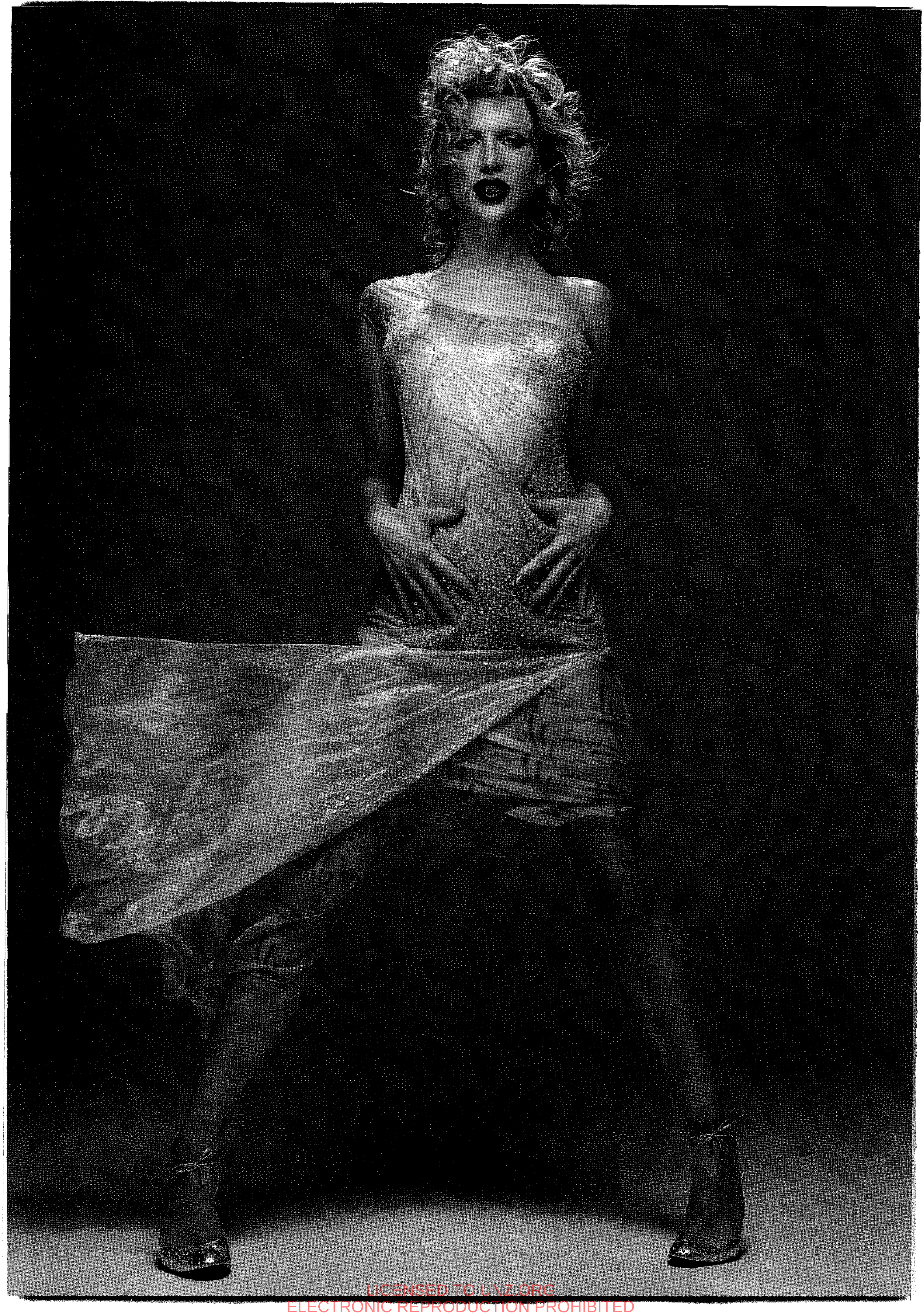

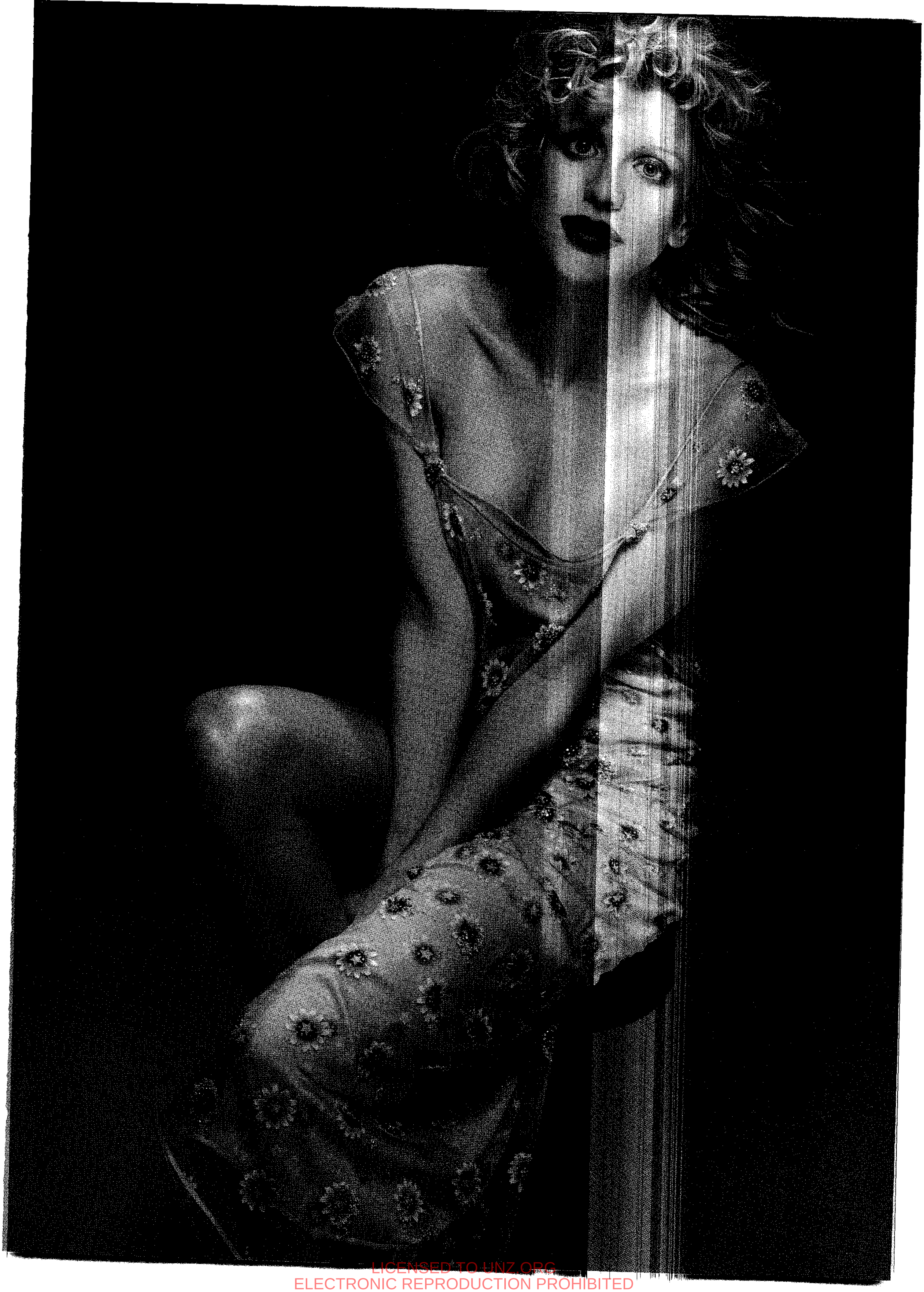

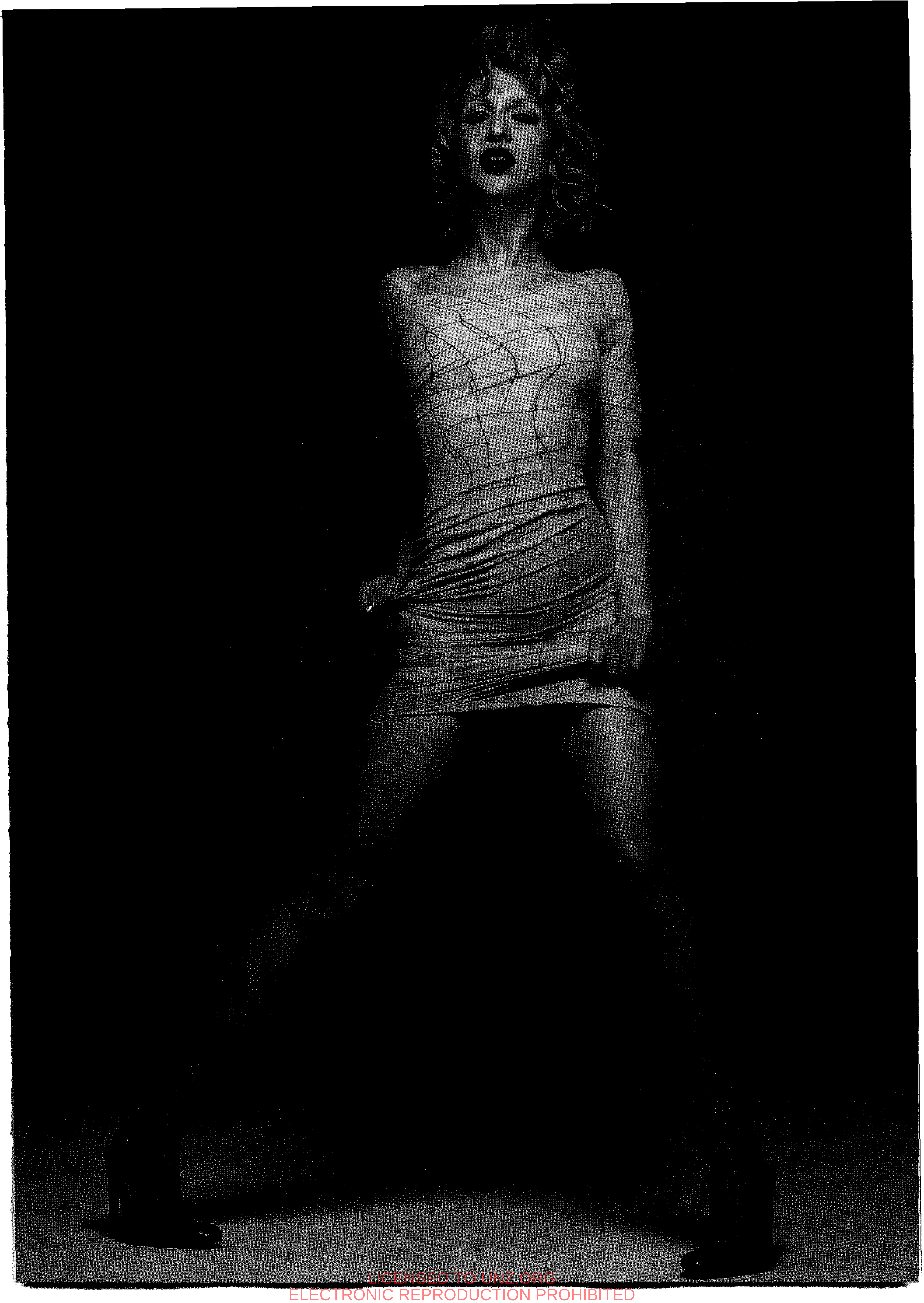

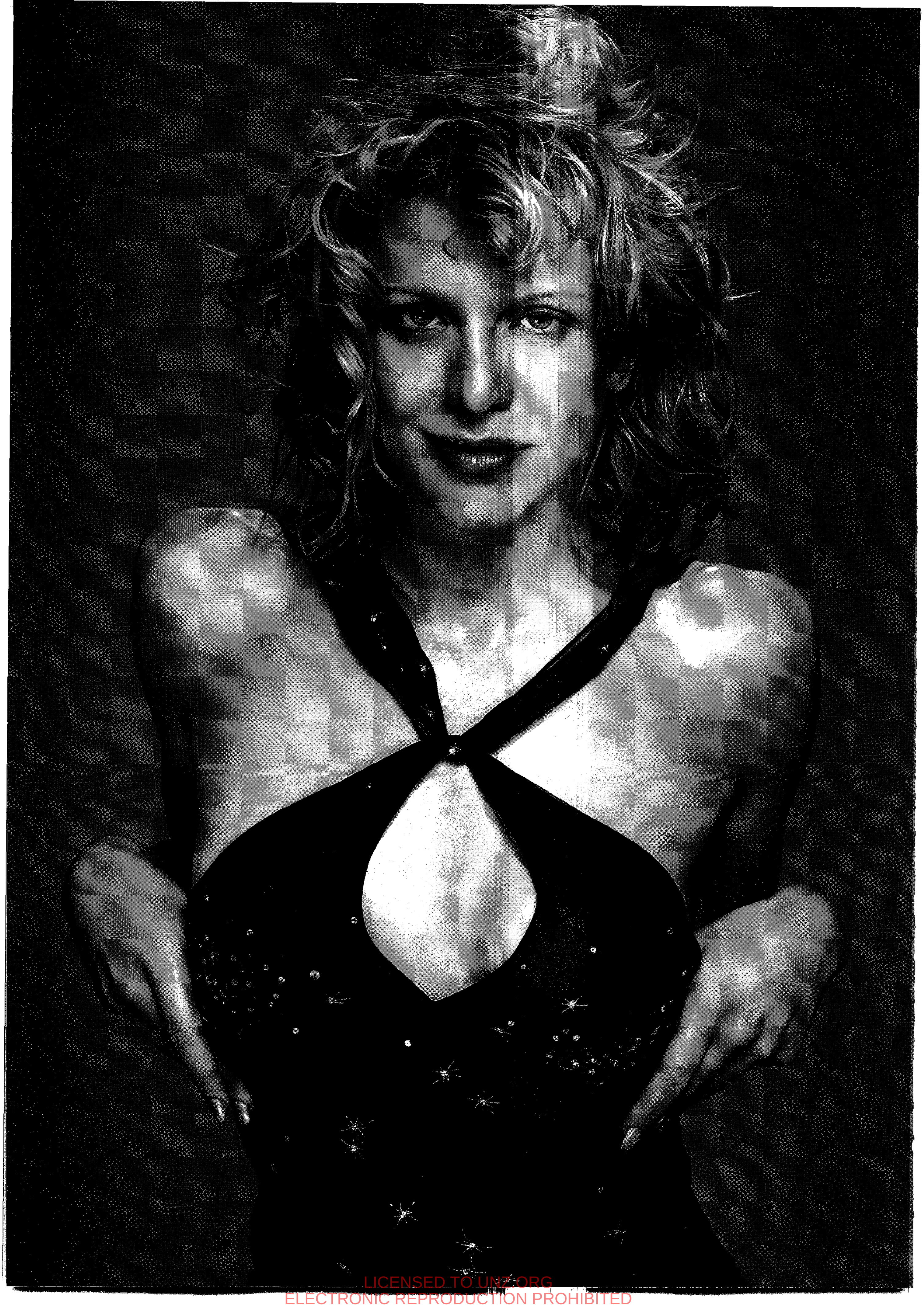

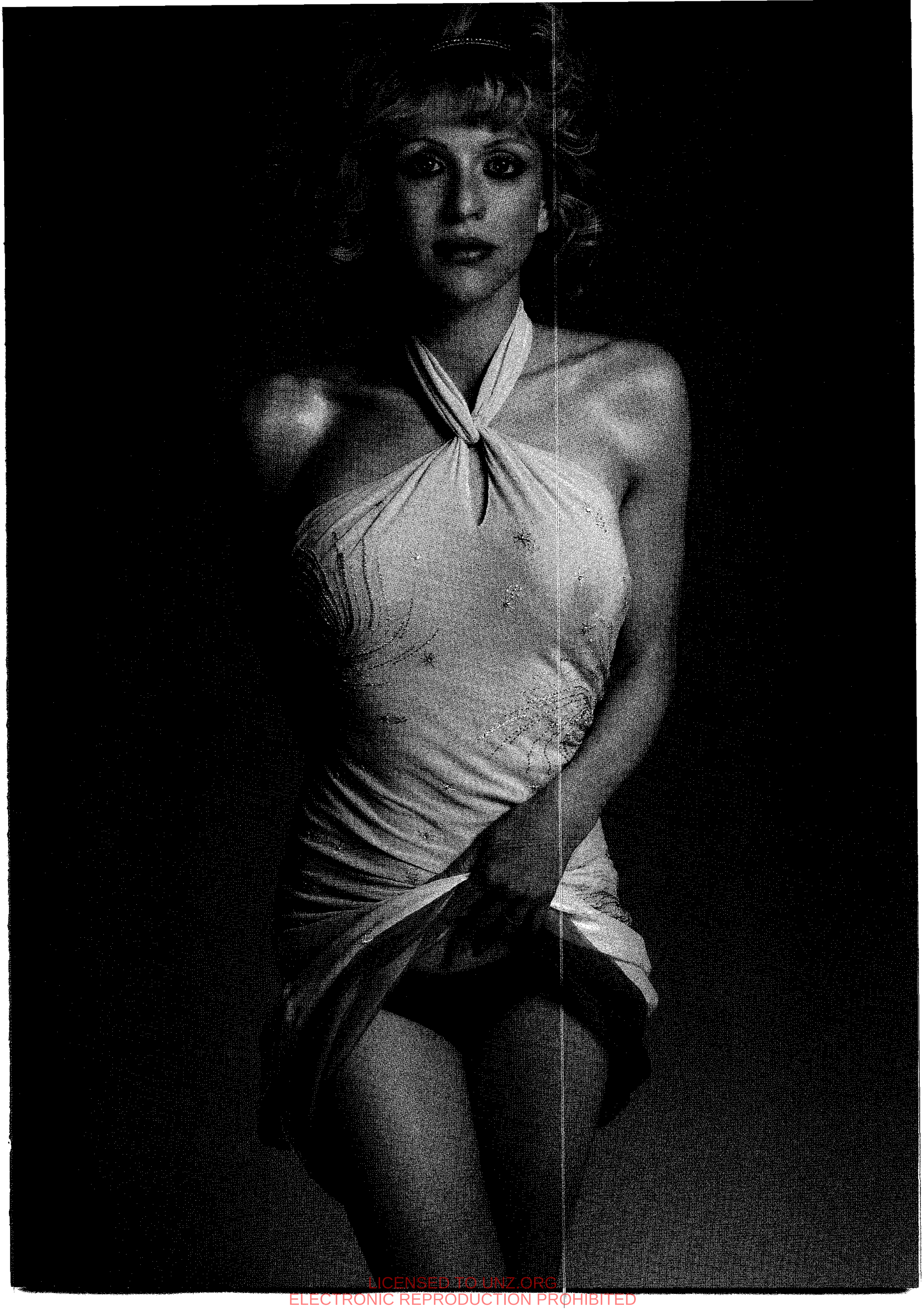

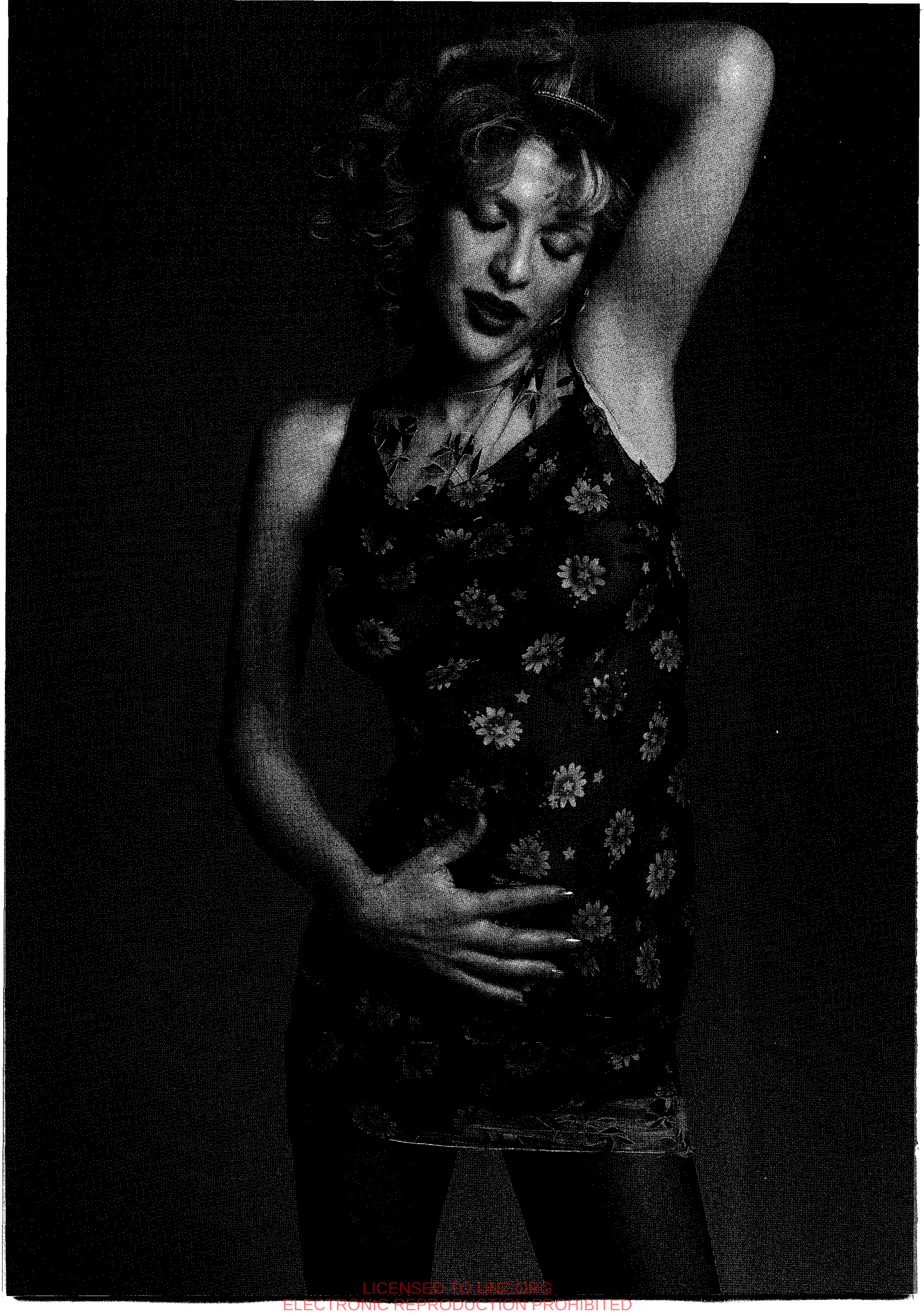

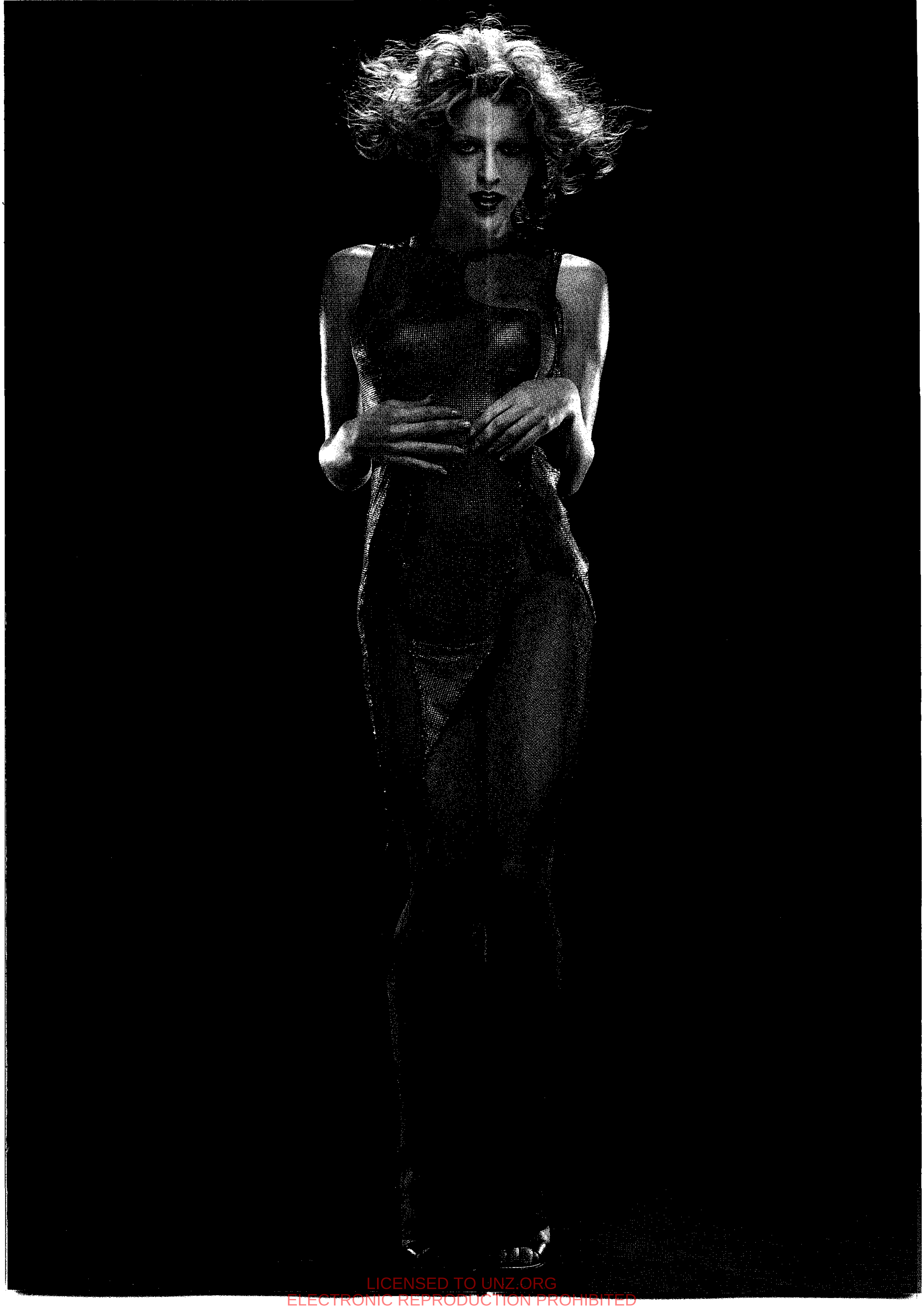

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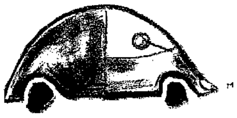
strictly prohibited. "To this day," Ewing told me, "I've never been to a political function." But the United States Attorney's office in general—and Ewing himself—operated in Memphis with a distinctly conservative social agenda.

The office was best known for prosecuting pornography, and specifically for the trial, in 1976, of Harry Reems (né Herbert Streicker), the co-star of "Deep Throat," which ended with the charges' being dismissed. Ewing did not play a large role in the pornography prosecutions, but he did reflect the spirit of the Turley years. Named Chief Assistant United States Attorney in 1977, Ewing developed a passion for—and a particular style of—prosecuting political corruption. His hallmarks were doggedness and a studied disregard for public opinion—qualities that have been evident in the widely unpopular Starr investigation. In 1981, Ronald Reagan appointed Ewing the new United States Attorney in western Tennessee, and he held that post for ten years. (The Bush Administration replaced him.)

Ewing operated with cold disregard for social niceties. Harold E. Ford, a local congressman who was on trial in Ewing's district for bank fraud, recalls, "Ewing would come over to me in the elevator and say, 'Did you have cocaine before or after breakfast this morning?' The guy was a stone nut." When I asked Ewing about this question, he said, "I know what it's based on, but I never said that to him." Ford was acquitted and has since retired from Congress. "Ewing is a very rigid man," one prominent Tennessee defense attorney says. "He's always had this righteous attitude about him."

Not always. In his boyhood and college days, Ewing shared the typical preoccupations of a Memphis youth—sports, beer, and Elvis. According to Larry Parrish, a friend and former colleague in the U.S. Attorney's office, "He doesn't just remember the Elvis Presley songs—when he would get a few beers in him he could sing them all." In the mid-seventies, groups of prosecutors and defense lawyers would make the trip to the Federal Appeals Court in Cincinnati to argue cases against each other. "It was nothing unusual for us to go out to one of the nicer restaurants and get drunk and pinch women on the tits," one lawyer recalls with amusement. But Ewing had a spiritual awakening in 1977, and afterward, the lawyer says, "Hick would go with us, but he wouldn't participate. He wouldn't even throw peanut shells on the ground."

In 1978, Ewing joined the First Evangelical Church, one of the largest and most conservative congregations in Memphis. Ewing left that church in the mid-nineteen-eighties, and he and a small group of friends founded the Fellowship Evangelical Church, over which he usually presided. With his conversion, Ewing began to set aside time for prayer when he rose each morning, and he soon stopped drinking entirely. He and his wife, Mary, have three children, and they sent all three to the Evangelical Christian School, in Memphis.



Ewing's conversion came with a commitment to service as well as with a habit of piety. In the last five years, he has travelled to Mexico seven times to work with the Tlapaneco Indians, who live in the mountainous Guerrero state. "I got to know a linguist who was the first person to record their language and give them an alphabet in this region," he told me. "Basically, we're supporting the work among the Indians. It's a Protestant mission, and you're also trying to improve a way of life."

Ewing's wife volunteers as an anti-abortion sidewalk counsellor outside clinics in Tennessee. Ed McAteer, a Memphis-based New Right activist, told me, "I love to kid Mary. She was doing that when Hick was the United States Attorney, and, from a marketing standpoint, that's a most unusual thing. But they are just very dedicated Christian people."

When Ewing was replaced as United States Attorney, in 1991, his friends held a testimonial in his honor at a Memphis restaurant. Few politicians were present, but there were several representatives of Christian-right organizations, including the Reverend Donald Wildmon's American Family Association, Beverly LaHaye's Concerned Women for America, and FLARE (Family, Life, America, and Responsible Education Under God). "I feel like I've just been an instrument over these years, and God should get the glory," Ewing told the group. "I'm trusting the Lord for the next step. I don't know what the next step is."

Shortly after he left, Ewing informed the *Commercial-Appeal* that he had considered going to work at a place like the Rutherford Institute—the Christian-right organization that has helped underwrite Paula Jones's sexual-harassment lawsuit against Clinton. He ultimately decided to open a one-man private law practice, with his wife as his secretary and sole employee until his daughter went to work for him, too. But less than three years after he left the government Starr called him back to prosecuting. He makes the three-hour drive from Little Rock to Memphis almost every weekend, to see his family and to go to church. In his car recently he had two cassette tapes: the Book of Deuteronomy and "The Comeback Kid Tour," by Paul Shanklin, who does anti-Clinton parodies on Rush Limbaugh's radio program.

PROSECUTORS rarely speak at the funerals of their coöperative witnesses, but Hickman Ewing rarely hesitates when he feels he's right. He has told colleagues that he believes the Clintons have engaged in a pattern of obstruction of justice that began in the eighties and continues to this day—and he runs his investigation accordingly. Starr said last week that the work of the Little Rock grand jury might be complete by the end of May, which leaves open the possibility of new indictments. According to a source close to Ewing's office, it is more likely that the Independent Counsel will issue a scathing report on the Clintons, perhaps before the Paula Jones trial, which begins May 27th. Certainly, Ewing has been active in recent months. On February 20th, in a case prosecuted by Ewing, former Arkansas Governor Jim Guy Tucker pleaded guilty to a tax-conspiracy charge and agreed to coöperate. On March 19th, a former Arkansas banker named H. Don Denton told the Little Rock grand jury about Mrs. Clinton's role in a twelve-year-old land deal financed by Madison Guaranty. One day recently as we walked away from the Little Rock courthouse, Ewing told me, "I'm keeping my nose to the grindstone on what's going on in Arkansas. We've got a lot going on down here." ♦

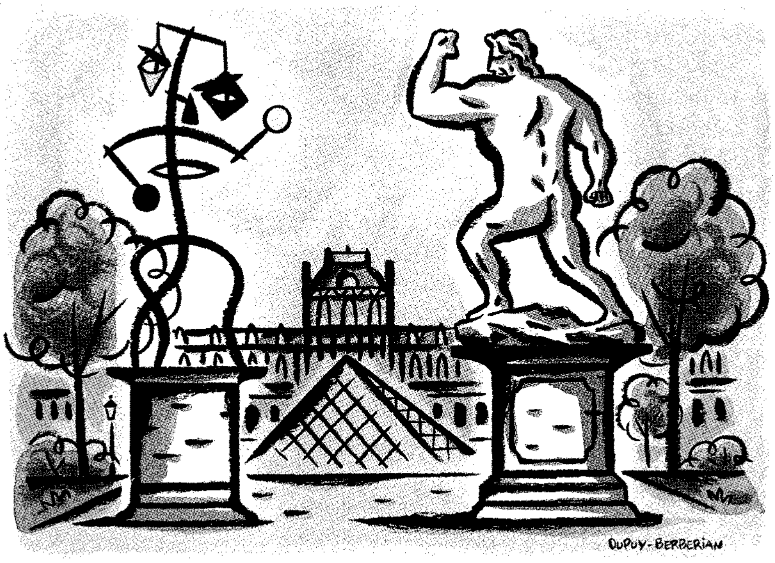
PARIS JOURNAL

IN THE GARDEN OF BIEN ET MAL

How a movie star and a sculptor started a war in the Tuileries.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

THE sculptor Alain Kirili has prepared an official report, modestly called "For the Installation of Twentieth Century Sculptures in the Tuileries at the Dawn of the Third Millennium," that puts the recent problem in the Tuileries gardens in stark, diagrammatic form. At the end of the report, which explains a plan Kirili has devised to install modern sculpture all over the Tuileries, there is a photocopied map of the gardens, with two small added black dots representing the problem and two long accusatory lines pointing at them, above the legend "Implantation of two sculptures by P. Belmondo." The two implanted sculptures are called "Jeannette" and "Apollon"; they are bronze nudes, about five and a half feet high, in a muscular pseudo-heroic style that an American art historian might call Debased Rockefeller Center or Thigh Master Moderne. They arrived at their place in the Tuileries last May when no one was looking, and were placed at the very edge of one of the lawns, a step away from the main allée, and they have been there ever since. "Apollon" is scowling, staring out defiantly; "Jeannette," a few steps behind him, stands demurely, with her hands just so. Their placement makes them look as though they had just been discovered making love in the grass by a *surveillant*, and the god had risen peevishly to protest the intrusion, while his girl looked around for her clothes.



Statues take center stage in the debate over French modern art.

The problem, though, is not their indecency. The problem is that most people believe they are in the gardens not because of what they are but because of who they know, and that they prevent anybody else from putting the sculptures that ought to be there there. Even before they arrived, people were arguing over what kind of sculpture ought to be in the gardens and who ought to put it there. There were the "moderns," led by Kirili, and the "ancients," led by the art historian Anne Pingeot (the mother of the late President Mitterrand's daughter). For both, the implantation of the two Belmondo sculptures was like one of the little nails that are driven by an Earth First! protester into a giant redwood: small as the nail may be, it prevents anybody else from timbering the tree.

P. Belmondo is Paul Belmondo, the father of the film star Jean-Paul Belmondo. Although the son has a reputation as a rough-and-ready blue-collar type, Paul was a noted academic sculptor of the thirties and forties, and two of his works were "Jeannette" and "Apollon." Jean-Paul gave them to the French government back in 1988, when Jack Lang was the Minister of Culture. The French state accepted the gift, but then kept the statues in a discreet part of the gardens, like a wedding tchotchke from an important friend that sits on the hall table under the phone messages. In the week before the legislative elections last spring, Belmondo *fils*, who in recent years has been openly unhappy about the decline of his career—for which he blames the American stranglehold on French movie theatres—and more and more attached to the memory of his father, mysteriously got permission from a higher-up to move the sculptures anywhere he wanted. He chose to move them to the "triumphal way"—the main drag of the Tuileries, which runs from Napoleon's arch to the giant Egyptian needle.

Kirili began to react. He is a passionate, snowman-shaped sculptor, with an international reputation for his sublime, phallic, forged-iron work. He believes in a physical and spiritual art, and he thinks that the three movements that come closest to his ideal are American Abstract Expressionism, Gothic sculpture, and free jazz. A book he has published on jazz and sculpture includes a concordance of great jazzmen and the artists their music resembles, which ranges from the self-evident (Charlie Parker and Jackson Pollock) to the occult (Meade Lux Lewis and Mondrian). Combining his three ruling passions, he arranges concerts at which post-bop and beyond-bop musicians are brought in to play percussion on his sculpture in great Gothic religious spaces. ("We did one in Cologne," he once explained cajolingly to the abbé of a Paris church. "It was very beautiful. We installed a piece of mine on the altar, below a Rubens altarpiece of the crucifixion of St. Peter. So there was St. Peter's head." Alain twisted his head upside down to indicate the position of the Saint's head. St. Peter, of course, was crucified upside down, out of modesty. "There was St. Peter's head and my piece, all in the same sublime plane.") About a year before the implantation, during the dedication of a large piece of Kirili's on the fringe of the gardens, near the Orangerie museum, Philippe Douste-Blazy, who was then the Minis-

DUPUY-BERBERIAN

ter of Culture, had, in a fit of cultural *extase*, asked Kirili if he would undertake the task of bringing modern sculpture into the Tuileries, and Kirili had jumped at the chance. During the election campaign, however, Douste-Blazy was stabbed in the back—literally, by a guy with a knife. (Luckily, it happened at Lourdes, where Douste-Blazy is the mayor, so he was O.K.) Understandably, he lost interest in the project.

It seemed likely that the arrival of the new Socialist government would end the plan altogether, since incoming governments rarely have time for the cultural ecstasies of outgoing ones. But the Socialists and their new Minister of Culture, Catherine Trautmann, who are far more skilled at cultural politics than their predecessors, shrewdly saw that this was a way to have a maximum of cultural effect with a minimum of outlay.

PEOPLE in New York talk about "cultural politics" a lot, but artistic conflicts in Manhattan tend in fact to be medieval: sieges between feudal powers or staged battles between mercenary armies, which are settled with gold just before the massacre. In a commercial society, power runs right down from a billionaire patron through a court of advisers and artisans. If someone wanted to bring sculpture into, say, Bryant Park, it would be necessary to court a wealthy patron who would be willing to pay for it, and who had sufficient clout with the Mayor to get it done. In Paris, the capital of a centralized bureaucratic state in which cultural power is widely dispersed among a functionary class, real politics—that is, skilled coalition building and manipulation among an array of counterpoised and relatively equal forces—really takes place.

Although Alain Kirili already had the official commission, it was a little like being nominated for office. He still had to run for it. He began to gather letters of support for the project from curators and critics and collectors in America and France. He also began to think about which modern sculptures would look good in the gardens. One of the ones he wanted was Picasso's "Homme au Mouton," the "Man with a Sheep," from the mid-forties, which lives at the Picasso Museum. This he

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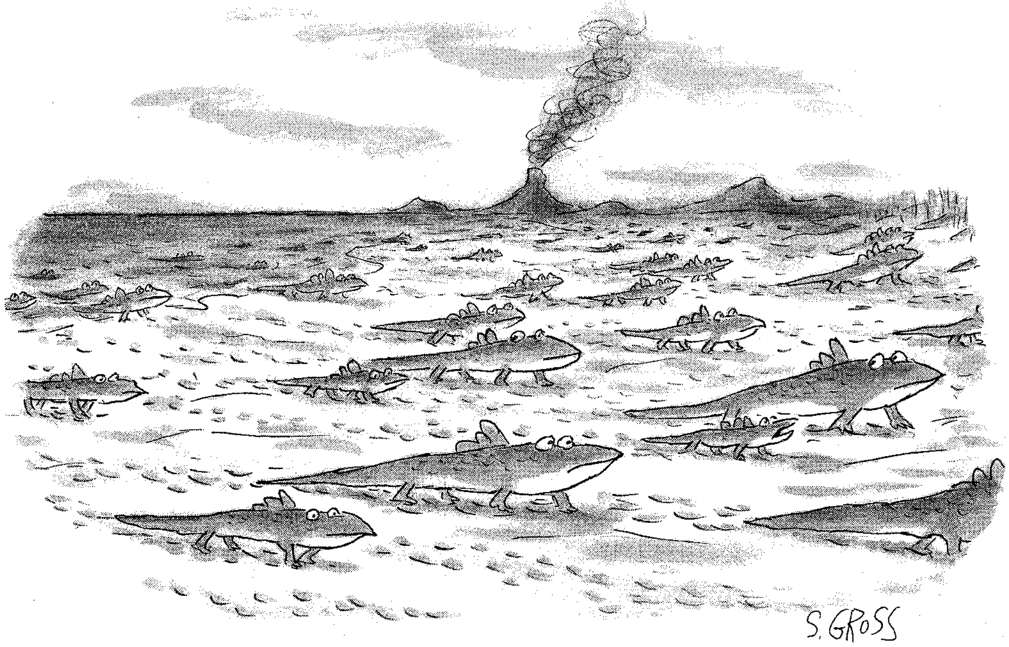
knew would be a problem, because the director of the museum was the conservative Jean Clair.

For Kirili, the politics was necessary to support a higher, quixotic end. "I want to defend modern art in the Tuileries," he once said forcefully at the café La Palette. "Not postmodern art. *Modern* art. At a time when the extreme right is pressing so hard on culture, I want to say yes, we are the capital of modern art. My conception of sculpture is tactile and emotional and sexual. I want the gardens to be a place where the pleasure of touching is possible again. I want to defend physicality. For me, Fragonard and Charlie Parker are in the same band. Carpeaux and Rodin and Cecil Taylor and everyone who asserts the primacy of the physical as a gateway to the sublime—for me, they're playing in the same band."

Then he outlined some of the political difficulties he faced. As so often in Paris, what looked like a public space turned out to be a patchwork of private domains. "We are working within constraints," he said. "The left side of the Tuileries is given over to the children's pony rides and the carrousel, and it is said that Mme. Giscard d'Estaing has a special concern for them." Mme. Giscard d'Estaing is the wife of a former President. "Then, of course, on the other side of the gardens, Anne Pingeot, the nineteenth-century historian, has drawn up a plan, and it argues for nothing but nineteenth-century sculpture. That is a concern. And there are the Belmondos. The facts about Belmondo may be useful, but they may not." He did not need to add that Mme. Pingeot had been the mistress of President Mitterrand, or that her special claim as a kind of second widow might weigh heavily on a Socialist government's feelings about public sculpture. And he did not add that the "facts" about Belmondo's father, which had been published in *Le Canard Enchaîné*, were that he had been close to the Nazi sculptor Arno Breker, Hitler's favorite, and had gone to Berlin in 1941, as an official representative of French art.

THE project to bring modern sculpture to the Tuileries arrived at a moment when everyone agreed that a century that had begun with Paris in an indisputable lead in the visual arts was nearing its end with Paris lying flat on her back, the finish line far away, and looking around to figure out what had happened. What is startling to an American is that, while in New York the debate about modern art is between modernists and post-modernists, in Paris it takes place between modernists and anti-modernists. This makes the debate in Paris at once more shallowly conservative—there are people who think it would have been better had Picasso never been born—and more interestingly radical: there are people who think it would have been better had Picasso never been born!



"Are we there yet?"

Jean Clair embodies the conservative sensibility at its most refined. Clair is the author of a new book, "The Responsibility of the Artist," which traces, as the book jacket says, "the genealogy of a perversion." The perversion is modern, or at least contemporary, Americanized art. The director of the Picasso Museum argues calmly that not only is the avant-garde modelled on the political utopias of the extreme left and right but it furnished the principal articles of their faith. "All I want to understand is why the students of the Bauhaus built Auschwitz," Clair says, in his apartment off the Place des Victoires. "Well, it's the same taste: for the tabula rasa, the massive remaking." It has seemed odd to many people that, given his views, M. Clair should be the man in charge of the museum devoted to the most famous modern artist, and Clair confesses to having "ambiguous" feelings about Picasso. "Yes, I do not admire Picasso the destroyer," he says. "Picasso the man who broke things apart, Picasso who ate all, devoured all. But I think there is another, more coherent Picasso, whom we can find, who remade, too."

On the subject of "Homme au Mouton," Clair was implacable. "I'm completely opposed. First, because it is part of the coherent collection. And, second, because of the vulgarity of the idea that somehow the public will be struck, opened up, given some miraculous capacity, just by looking at works of modern art in a public space. If we're going to move sculptures, spend money on these things, let us have sculpture that was meant for the place it is going, instead of moving things out of their real homes in order to cheaply serve that demagogic notion of instant education by art."

Clair's chief opponent in the ideological art war—to which most of an issue of *Le Débat*, the leading French intellectual magazine, was devoted—is Philippe Dagen, the art critic of *Le Monde*. Most people in Paris believe the decline of the city as an art capital began in the nineteen-forties, when the Nazi occupation forced artists to emigrate or go into hiding, leaving the field to mediocre neoclassicists like Paul Belmondo. This is one reason that the "implantation" was so offensive to so many people. It wasn't just bad art; it was the kind of bad art that had helped diminish Paris.

Dagen has a subtler theory, which traces the decline to the twenties, when in the aftermath of the war many of the leading Parisian painters, Picasso first among them, retreated into a neoclassical style. He feels that the real enemies of art in France are not the outright reactionary followers of Le Pen but the nostalgic neoclassicists, like Clair. "For Clair and others, this decade of the twenties was almost invisible, until recently," he says. "Now it has become their favorite period—a period of good, national, classically based modernism." Dagen, a tall, intense fortyish man, sees the crisis in French art as a series of refusals that began in the twenties: a refusal of collectors to collect contemporary art, the permanent lag of the French state in addressing modern art (it fell fifty years behind in the nineteenth century, and has never recovered), and above all the refusal of intellectuals to overcome a "bitter nostalgia" that sees questions of art in national terms. "It is scandalous that we are still catching up; the project in the Tuileries is just a moment of honesty, a chance to make amends before the end of the century."

EVENTUALLY, the Ministry of Culture stepped in, and decided to apply the philosophe Fontenelle's rule for a happy life: Everything is possible and everyone is right. In a meeting in February, the Ministry declared that all would have prizes. Modern sculpture would be moved into the Tuileries, but the question of the "Man with a Sheep" would be saved for another day. Letters would be sent to Alain Kirili, promising him the full support of the Ministry, and to Jean-Paul Belmondo, promising him that nothing would be done.

Pierre Encrevé, a sub-minister at the beautiful Ministry of Culture, in the Palais Royal, insists blandly that there was never any polemic about the sculpture in the Tuileries. "No, there was no polemic, no debate," he said recently. "Everyone was in accord. Everyone was in agreement. It's a natural extension of the great renovation of the Louvre that began in President Mitterrand's time. There is no real polemic about art here. We are simply bringing the concord of traditional and innovative culture another step forward. Look at the Pyramide." He meant I.M. Pei's glass entrance to the museum. "Look at the Pyramide and the Louvre. They live in harmony. This project will, too." He paused for a moment, and then he announced, "*On va recréer une continuité qui a toujours existé depuis longtemps*"—"We are going to re-create a continuity that has always existed for a very long time." It was a perfect French ministerial sentence, a sentence you could walk around and admire from every angle, like a statue in the park.

Alain Kirili has already begun to plan his installation, and has picked out his favorite pieces—a couple of Calders, a Smith, a Sol LeWitt, and a Martin Puryear. On the other hand, "Jeannette" and "Apollon" are still there. Kirili at least has the good words of his supporter Dina Vierny. She is the director of the Maillol Museum, on the Rue de Grenelle, and she came by her role in the best way anyone could: she posed for all the sculpture. She is the original of all those splendid, wasp-waisted, hippo-hipped, swan-necked ladies who decorate the world's museums, and, in her seventies, is still the sexiest museum head in France, in touch with the mixture of sensuality and refinement that is French civilization. ("We ate roots," she said once, apropos of nothing, in the midst of a meeting about the project. "During the war, Maillol and I ate roots. He cooked them, of course. He made them sublime. That's when I knew he was a true genius. Everything he touched was touched with genius.") Her words were simple and terrific. "*Bon courage*," she said to Kirili once when he was concerned about the politics of the gardens. "We are both already there." She meant, of course, that Kirili was there, alongside the Orangerie, while she was all over the place, in her own beautiful younger form, naked, in bronze, and for good. ◆

A THOUGHT FOR THIS WEEK

[*From the Milford* (*Mass.*) *Daily News*]

Passover is best known because its story was conveyed in the movie, "The Ten Commandments."

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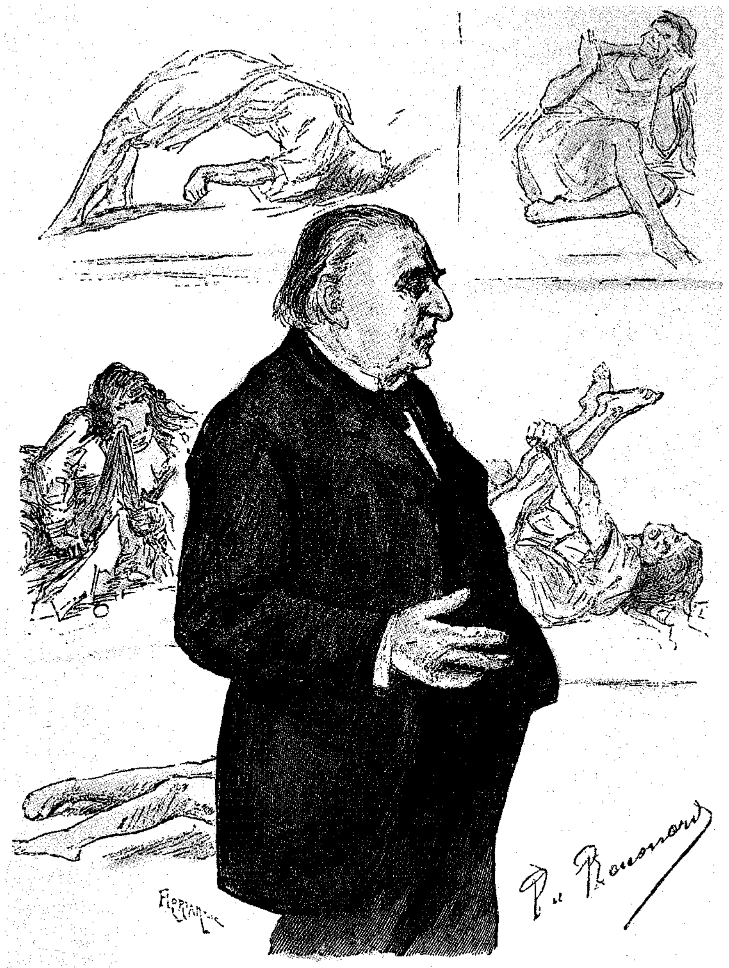
A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE POLITICS OF HYSTERIA

Over the past twenty years, multiple-personality disorder has been used to explain the behavior of thousands of American women. How was it allowed to happen?

BY JOAN ACOCELLA



In late 1989, Elizabeth Carlson, a thirty-five-year-old woman who lived with her husband and two children in a Minneapolis suburb, was in the hospital being treated for severe depression. She was referred to a psychiatrist, Diane Humenansky, who came to see her and went on seeing her after she left the hospital. As Carlson recalls, Humenansky soon suggested to her that perhaps her problem was not depression but multiple-personality disorder. M.P.D., Humenansky explained, was an elusive illness: many diagnosticians failed to recognize the alternating personalities, or alters, for what they were, with the result that the woman—nine out of ten people with M.P.D. were women—often ended up getting misdiagnosed. But experts now knew that there were certain telltale signs of M.P.D. Did Carlson ever "zone out" while driving, and arrive at her destination without remembering quite how she got there? Why, yes, Carlson said. Well, that was an alter taking over the driving and then vanishing again. Another sign, Humenansky said, was "voices in the head." Did Carlson ever have internal arguments, telling herself, for example, "Turn right—no, turn left"? Yes, Carlson replied, that happened sometimes. Well, that was the alters quarrelling inside her head. Carlson was amazed and embarrassed. All these years, she had done these things, never realizing that they were symptoms of a serious mental disorder.

Multiple personality, Humenansky explained, was associated with childhood sexual abuse, though the abuse might be forgotten. Carlson should think hard: had anyone ever taken liberties with her? Carlson didn't have to think hard. She distinctly remembered being molested by two men in her family. That didn't mean there weren't other episodes, Humenansky said. Worse ones, maybe.

To help Carlson remember, Humenansky gave her books to read. One was Ellen Bass and Laura Davis's 1988 "The Courage to Heal," now known as the Bible of the recovered-memory movement. A third of American women were sexually abused as girls, "The Courage to Heal" stated, and if a woman was repeatedly molested she might have not only forgotten it but developed new personalities in which to seal off the terrible knowledge. "The Courage to Heal" gave first-person accounts. In a later edition, one woman wrote:

> I remember splitting for the first time when I was about four and my father was trying to force me to sodomize my pet rabbit with a roofing nail. He got very angry when I refused, and finally, in a rage, he threw me down on the basement floor and raped me. When I came back to myself after the experience, there were three parts of me. . . . Benjamin—ageless, spiritual and protective; Bunny—little and worried; and Scarlet, the only female and the one who dealt with the sexual abuse.

Humenansky also gave Carlson books about M.P.D. cases. One was the 1957 classic "The Three Faces of Eve," by Corbett Thigpen and Hervey Cleckley, the story of the shy housewife "Eve White" who on the odd weekend would metamorphose into "Eve Black," a vivacious party girl, leaving Eve White with unexplained hangovers and a reputation in local bars. As a result of this book and the 1957 movie based on it, featuring an Academy Award-winning performance by Joanne Woodward, Eve became, for a while, the prototype of the multiple personality. In later cases, as in Eve's, there was often the naughty/nice split—"librarian by day and streetwalker by

[THIS PAGE] GRANGER COLLECTION; [OPPOSITE] JEAN-LOUP CHARMET, PARIS

Above: Under hypnosis, a patient of the nineteenth-century Parisian neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot (opposite) would undergo hysterical attacks in front of a fascinated audience. M.P.D. is part of the history of hysteria.

night," to quote the M.P.D. expert Frank Putnam.

Eve, however, was merely the John the Baptist of multiple personality; the Christ was "Sybil Dorsett," a Columbia University graduate student who in 1954, at the age of thirty-one, turned up in the office of the psychiatrist Cornelia Wilbur and stayed for eleven years. In 1973, this case became the subject of a best-selling book, "Sybil," by a journalist named Flora Rheta Schreiber. Three years later, the book was turned into a TV movie, with Sally Field as Sybil and Joanne Woodward, passing the torch, as Dr. Wilbur. Sybil became the most famous psychiatric patient in history, and the new model of multiple-personality disorder, in a form different from Eve's. For one thing, M.P.D. now had a clear cause: childhood sexual abuse. Eve had suffered traumas as a child, but she was never sexually assaulted. Sybil was—repeatedly, by her mother. Furthermore, the mother's actions were sadistic, perverse, extravagant. According to the book, she probed the child's vagina with a knife and a buttonhook. She hung her upside down and, using an enema bag, filled her bladder with ice-cold water, then tied her to the family piano and forbade her to urinate while she, the mother, played Chopin. A second difference between Eve and Sybil was in the number of alters. As described by her therapists, Eve had had only three faces. ("Eve White" and "Eve Black" were later joined by "Jane.") Sybil had sixteen personalities. One could play the piano; another could install Sheetrock; two had English accents; two were boys. Sybil wasn't so much a person as a club.

Prior to Sybil, M.P.D. had been one of the rarest of mental disorders. In a 1944 article, two researchers, W. S. Taylor and Mabel Martin, reported that a search of the medical literature had yielded only seventy-six cases that met their definition. But after Sybil M.P.D. exploded. One expert estimated that between 1985 and 1995 there were almost forty thousand new cases. Like Sybil, the modal M.P.D. patient was a white North American female around age thirty. Like Sybil, she said she had suffered child abuse, usually sexual. But Sybil's descendants outstripped her. Patients were soon producing a hundred, four hundred, a thousand alters. And, whereas Sybil had confined herself to human alters, later M.P.s branched out. The Georgia-based psychiatrist George Ganaway, one of the first authorities to caution against the fascination with M.P.D., reported that he had been presented with "sages, lobsters, chickens, tigers, a gorilla, a unicorn, and 'God.'" In recollections of abuse, too, Sybil was rapidly outdone. Multiples were now reporting rape and sodomy—indeed, "satanic ritual abuse."

Both Eve and Sybil had been suicidal, but the multiple personalities of the eighties and nineties were more ingeniously self-destructive. In one popular M.P.D. biography, "Suffer the Child," the subject pours drain cleaner on her genitals. Other multiples have shown journalists self-inflicted cuts and third-degree burns. Self-mutilation was accepted by many M.P.D. writers as a regular feature of the disorder, a "coping mechanism." Starting in 1990, self-mutilating patients had a newsletter, *The Cutting Edge*. In a recent issue, "Carla" writes that she doesn't really want to stop cutting herself, and that her new therapist has left the decision up to her, so she's cutting again, "yet it's been a time of tremendous growth and potential."

UNTIL about 1975, there had been no M.P.D. specialty. Multiple-personality disorder had no separate listing in the American Psychiatric Association's "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders," or D.S.M., the guidebook to diagnosis. But in 1980, after vigorous lobbying by interested therapists, the new edition of D.S.M. gave M.P.D. a primary-level listing among the dissociative disorders—conditions in which some part of mental functioning splits off from consciousness. In 1984, the new M.P.D. enthusiasts founded an organization of their own, the International Society for the Study of Multiple Personality and Dissociation (I.S.S.M.P. & D.), and began holding annual conferences, co-sponsored by Rush-Presbyterian–St. Luke's Medical Center, in Chicago. That hospital subsequently set up the country's first dissociative-disorders unit, under the M.P.D. expert Bennett Braun. Other units followed. Between 1970 and 1990, the average annual output of publications on M.P.D. increased six thousand per cent.

Among those publications were two 1989 textbooks: "Diagnosis and Treatment of Multiple Personality Disorder," by Frank Putnam, and "Multiple Personality Disorder," by Colin Ross. Both offered treatment plans focussing on presumed childhood abuse. Using hypnosis, the therapist was instructed to flush out the alters and get them to divulge their secrets, a process that often involved protracted reënactments called "abreactions." In a typical abreaction, as Colin Ross described it, the patient might "cry out, plead with the father to stop, clutch her pubic area, try to push the father off, attempt to spit out semen, or curl up in the corner." These were violent scenes. David Calof, an M.P.D. therapist who has worked in nursing homes, reports that one of his patients had a stroke during an abreaction.

Confronted with this information, many therapists began viewing their patients in a new light. That is apparently what happened with Diane Humenansky. She attended lectures and read books on M.P.D. She spoke to Cornelia Wilbur. Soon she had a number of newly diagnosed multiples under her care. Humenansky has declined to be interviewed for this article; therefore my account of her treatment of Carlson is largely Carlson's account. It is hard to know what Humenansky was thinking. Carlson says Humenansky told her she had been through three divorces, had lost custody of her children to her third husband, and was herself taking antidepressants. In 1989, when she began treating Carlson, Humenansky was still a fully accredited physician—a graduate of Wayne State Medical School, though, according to Carlson, she claimed it was Harvard—with admitting privileges at several Twin Cities hospitals.

Carlson says Humenansky gave her not just books but videotapes: the movie versions of "Sybil" and "The Three Faces of Eve," pornographic films, war footage of people being decapitated. She said that if Carlson felt any physical discomfort while watching the videos, that was a "body memory": it meant that such things had happened to her, too. Carlson also says that Humenansky had her do visualization exercises, "trying on" scenes of molestation

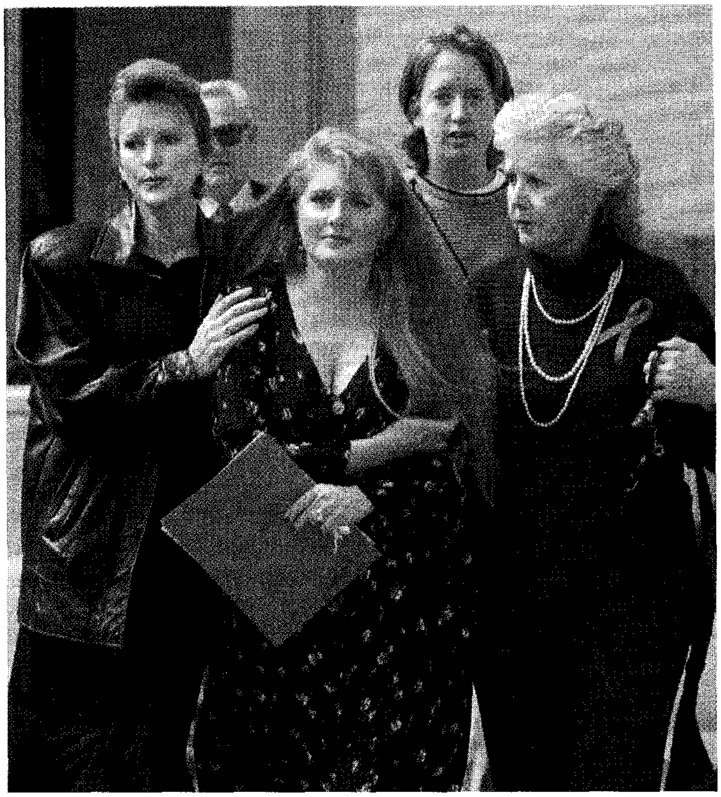
(CLOCKWISE) SALLY SAVAGE; PETER DASILVA/AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTO; MELISSA GERR; PHIL VELASQUEZ/CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

by various people. Using this technique, Carlson soon recovered memories of being molested by as many as fifty relatives, including both parents, both sets of grandparents, aunts, uncles, and great-grandparents.

According to Carlson, Humenansky also used a technique called guided imagery, in which the patient is talked through an imaginary scene in order to awaken buried memories. In one scenario, Humenansky told Carlson to picture herself going downstairs. Look for an altar, Humenansky said. Carlson saw a stone slab. Look around for candles and daggers, Humenansky said. Carlson saw them. Now look for the baby, Humenansky said. Carlson does not remember at what point her own imagination, primed by the books and videos, took over, but soon she saw a pregnant woman. Then the baby was born, and the afterbirth was lying on the altar, and people in hooded robes were eating it, and so was she. (That was the first cannibalism scene Carlson recovered with Humenansky. Today, nine years later, she still has nightmares.) The therapy sessions often ended with Carlson's weeping uncontrollably. Carlson says Humenansky would give her tranquillizers and tell her to chew them so that they would take effect faster.

It wasn't long before Carlson, under Humenansky's guidance, began identifying her different personalities. One of them was Little Miss Fluff, a nickname that she had been given as a child because she liked frilly dresses and crinolines. In the Eve Black slot, Carlson produced a hussy named Nikita. Sybil had had two male alters; so, quite soon, did Carlson. She also located two nuns, Sister Mary Margaret and Sister Mary Theresa (the latter wanted to join the Peace Corps) and a scared, depressed Old Lady. When Carlson's mood changed, Humenansky told her she had "switched," or changed alters. If she showed up for her session in a short skirt, that meant that Nikita was "out." If she was depressed, that was the Old Lady taking over. Interestingly, though—and this seems to be the case with many multiples who have not written memoirs—Carlson never quite got the hang of multiplicity. To this day, she doesn't know how many personalities she had. "After twenty-five, I lost count," she says. Humenansky had Carlson write down their names, ages, and key memories on index cards for reference, but, Carlson says, "I still couldn't keep the darn things straight." Once, she lost the card file, and they had to do the whole business all over again. Sometimes, she would walk into Humenansky's office and say that she didn't want to explore alters that day—she just needed to talk. Carlson recalls, "Dr. Humenansky said, 'Well, who am I talking to?' And I would say, 'This is just me, Elizabeth.' She said, 'No, I want to know which alter I'm talking to.' 'It's not an alter,' I said. 'It's just me.' Finally she got out an index card and wrote down 'Just Me.' "

Meanwhile, Carlson's mental condition was worsening. The main events of her week were her two appointments with Humenansky—an individual session and a group session with other M.P.D. patients. For a year, Carlson was so depressed that she rarely left her bedroom. Heavily drugged, she sometimes slept eighteen or twenty hours a day. She had terrible nightmares and woke up screaming and vomiting. "I stank, the room stank," she remembers. "Every few days or so, my husband or my daughter would take me and shove me into the shower and hose me down." Then she would go back to bed. Carlson's daughter, Lisha, who was in her teens, took over the household and the care of her younger brother. Eventually, she had to drop out of school. Carlson's marriage, which had already been troubled when she first began seeing Humenansky, deteriorated day by day. Carlson says Humenansky suggested that perhaps her husband was trying to



Clockwise from above: Elizabeth Carlson produced more than twenty-five "alters"; Eileen Lipsker's recovered memories were used at her father's murder trial; Dr. Diane Humenansky; Patricia Burgus believed she was a satanic priestess.

kill her. Carlson threw him out of the house repeatedly. Meanwhile, she had cut off all contact with the rest of her family, because, as she now understood, they were still members of the cult that had abused her as a child, and if they found out what she was revealing in therapy they would murder her.

"I just got crazier and crazier," Carlson recalls. She banged her head on walls and tore out her hair in chunks. "I was ready to kill myself. I thought it was better for me, and better for my children." When, in rare moments of protest, she asked Humenansky why the therapy wasn't helping, the doctor repeated to her a basic principle of M.P.D. treatment: "The patient has to get worse in order to get better."

How could Carlson have believed what Humenansky was telling her? M.P.D. patients are often given strong medications—particularly benzodiazepines, such as Valium, Halcion, and Xanax. (In a 1995 court case, Colin Ross acknowledged that he had had one patient on fifty-one milligrams of Halcion a day, which is a hundred times the prescribed maximum for that drug.) During her time with Humenansky, Carlson took Xanax, Valium, and Ativan for anxiety; Pamelor, Desyrel, and Prozac for depression; and Restoril for insomnia. In the words of one former patient, "If you take enough drugs, you can remember about anything."

Another factor in the M.P.D. epidemic was hypnosis. For well over a century, it has been recognized that the memories people produce under hypnosis are not necessarily accurate. Above all, subjects are exquisitely sensitive to cuing by the therapist. Experiments have shown that hypnotized subjects, given the appropriate suggestion, can recall former lives as chimpanzees. For these reasons, supreme courts in half the states no longer admit hypnotically refreshed testimony. Nevertheless, in a 1992 survey of more than a thousand psychotherapists with advanced degrees, the hypnosis expert Michael Yapko found that almost half of them believed that memories produced under hypnosis were more accurate than nonhypnotic recall.

A third factor was the patients' hypnotizability. The ability to go into a trance varies from person to person, but it doesn't vary much in multiples. In the words of the M.P.D. theorist Eugene Bliss, they are "hypnotic virtuosos." If a highly hypnotizable woman goes to a therapist who believes in M.P.D. and in the accuracy of hypnotic recall, and if the therapist asks her, while she is under hypnosis, whether she has other "parts" to her personality (something that most of us feel we have, if only metaphorically) and whether she was abused as a child (something that many of us feel we were, if only psychologically), she is likely to produce.

"So Zeus was like their President Bill Clinton?"

Believers in M.P.D. argue that many patients receive their diagnosis without having been hypnotized. But people who are highly hypnotizable often do not require formal hypnotic induction in order to go into a trance. Many diagnosed multiples, whether or not they have M.P.D., do have dissociative symptoms—"spells," trances—that make them vulnerable to suggestion. Elizabeth Carlson remembered vividly the meetings of the satanic cult: the color of the men's robes, the sight of the afterbirth on the altar. Humenansky didn't hypnotize her, and didn't have to, for Carlson was highly trance-prone.

Another important factor was the media. During the period of Carlson's therapy, magazines and newspapers were retailing utterly credulous stories about M.P.D. And then there was television. Phil Donahue was apparently the first talk-show host to present a program on M.P.D.; he was followed by Sally Jessy Raphael, Larry King, Leeza Gibbons, and Oprah Winfrey. Meanwhile, celebrities were coming forward with tales of childhood abuse: Roseanne, La Toya Jackson, Oprah herself. Some claimed to be multiples. Roseanne, for example, had unearthed twenty-one personalities in herself, including Piggy, Bambi, and Fucker. M.P.D. experts also went on TV. Bennett Braun appeared on the Chicago evening news with his star patient, who switched personalities on camera. Again and again, on the talk shows it was stressed that M.P.D. was not rare; it was common. "This could be someone you know," Sally Jessy Raphael said.

On the average, people who receive a diagnosis of M.P.D. have already spent seven years in the mental-health system. According to various patient surveys, almost ninety per cent of them are depressed, sixty-one per cent have made serious suicide attempts, and fifty-three per cent have a history of substance abuse. Elizabeth Carlson came from a family of eight children, with a distraught mother. "I believed that that was how all families were," she says. "That if your mother was having a bad day, she beat the crap out of you, broke a broom over your head." As for being molested, Carlson thought that that was normal, too, and when she found out it wasn't, she figured it was her fault: "Because I was such a girly girl, always flouncing around, with the little anklets and the little ringlets. I had called attention to myself, and that's how those incidents happened to me." At fourteen, she started running away from home. Then she lapsed into a depression and was hospitalized. Her parents, feeling unable to cope with her, made her a ward of the state, and she was placed in a "youth center." There were further depressions and hospitalizations, and also suicide attempts.

By 1989, when Carlson began seeing Dr. Humenansky, she was on her second marriage. She had two children and no money. She had tried to go back to college, but in the middle of class she would be seized by a panic attack and would have to leave the room. She had sometimes worked as a fitness instructor, but at this point she had been unemployed for four years, and was in the hospital again—her fifth psychiatric hospitalization, as she recalls. And when Humenansky told her that the cause of all her unhappiness was multiple-personality disorder her life made sense to her for the first time in years. It wasn't she who had done things wrong; it was her alters.

Furthermore, Humenansky seemed to be offering her a kind of sympathy and care that she had been lacking for a very long time. Most diagnosed multiples have reported long histories of abandonment. Once they find the M.P.D. doctor, this relationship, in the words of the M.P.D. expert Richard Kluft, is likely to become "the most powerful and/or gratifying event of their lives."

M.P.D. therapy offered Carlson a further inducement: political solidarity. Child-molesting is primarily a crime against females, and, according to M.P.D. insiders, that was why M.P.D. had been so ignored in the past: because women had no political power. To own up to having been abused, to reveal the damage done—in short, to have M.P.D.—was to stand up for women. The relationship between the M.P.D. movement and feminism is a thorny matter. On the one hand, M.P.D. and its underpinning, recovered memory, have been caustically criticized by a number of feminist writers, among them Janice Haaken, Ruth Leys, Debbie Nathan, Wendy Kaminer, Carol Tavris, Louise Armstrong, and Elaine Showalter. On the other hand, both M.P.D. and recovered memory are in large part feminist movements, whose supporters have accused those critics of being turncoats, abandoners of women.

Actually, the M.P.D. craze was probably a side effect of the women's movement. While feminism rescued many women from positions of dependency, it left others behind—notably, a large number of working-class women. Many of these women had the same difficult lives that their mothers had had: early pregnancy, unkind husbands, boring jobs, little money, no education. But in the post-sixties period they also lost the protections that their mothers had had: a strong family structure and the belief that their fate was woman's fate. As the Marxists would say, they were deprived of false consciousness. All around them, they saw women who did not share this "woman's fate." How had they missed the boat? This state of affairs may help to explain not just M.P.D. but the general outbreak of female disorders in the last few decades: eating disorders, codependency, and so on. Wendy Kaminer, in her book "I'm Dysfunctional, You're Dysfunctional," tells of women in recovery groups accusing themselves of being passive, submissive. "These are women whom feminism bypassed," Kaminer writes.

So were the multiples, with the difference that their disorder supplied what they lacked. Suddenly, with the establishment of the abuse history, they were no longer downtrodden. They were courageous—survivors. Furthermore, they were unusually intelligent—an article of faith in the M.P.D. literature. (Sybil was said by Schreiber to have had an I.Q. of 170.) Above all, they were creative, or they became so once they got into M.P.D. therapy. They were asked to inventory their alters, showing all the things they were—a project that, according to Colin Ross, might take as long as a year. They were required to tell their story, and, as the therapist made clear to them, it was a fascinating tale. For this project, furthermore, they had a support network. By the late eighties, there were clubs for multiples to join, newsletters to publish their poems, exhibitions of their art.

In other words, M.P.D. therapy gave its clients something that they could not get from the society: an interesting job. Chris Sizemore ("Eve") has said that having M.P.D. was "fun"—that when she recovered, the "magic" went out of her life. In Carlson's M.P.D. group, the women would get down on the floor, switch into their child personalities, and play board games, while Humenansky sat in a chair, smiling down on them—like Mother Goose, Carlson says. "There we'd be, playing Candyland, and our insurance companies would be getting charged for it." For most patients, life as a multiple cannot actually be fun, but, as Kluft has acknowledged, it may be preferable to their "baseline realities." And, no matter how bad things are, the patient at least has the pleasure of knowing that she has a famous illness. Humenansky told Carlson that she was going to write a book on M.P.D., and that Carlson's story would be part of it.

EVENTUALLY, Carlson came to her senses. Another woman in her M.P.D. group recommended a new medication to her. She got a prescription from Dr. Humenansky, started taking the drug, and felt better, so she flushed all her other pills down the toilet. Around the same time, Humenansky brought a new patient into the group, and nobody liked her. "She monopolized the hour," Carlson says. "No one else could talk. Also, she kept lifting up her blouse and showing us where she had sprayed oven cleaner on her breasts." When the others protested, Humenansky said that if they didn't like the group they could start their own. They did so. Once a week they got together, and as they talked they began to notice certain odd things: all of them had similar abuse memories, memories that closely resembled events in the books Humenansky had given them. Carlson recalls, "One woman said, 'I have a confession to make. I made up an alter named Nikki, because everybody else in the group had a Nikki, and I felt left out.' Slowly it began to dawn on us what had happened. Still, I didn't feel I could quit therapy." One day, she called Dr. Humenansky's office to confirm an appointment. As Carlson recalls, the doctor "said that the M.P.D. group was conspiring against her and that, on the advice of her attorneys, she was dropping all of us as patients. This was in November. I begged her to keep me until the holidays. Christmas was always hard for me. She said no and hung up. I cried. That was the end. Two years."

Carlson's is by no means the most grotesque of the M.P.D. cases that have come to light in the past few years. Unlike Bennett Braun's star patient, Patricia Burgus, who switched alters on camera for the Chicago TV news, Carlson did not come to believe that she was a satanic priestess in charge of a nine-state region; that she had eaten parts of two thousand dead bodies per year; or that her children were cult members and practiced killers. Unlike Burgus, and also unlike Mary Shanley, another patient in Braun's unit at Rush, she did not hospitalize her children and confess that she had molested them. Unlike Shanley, she was not a primary-school teacher, and so she was not reported to the authorities by one of her therapists and effectively barred from practicing her profession for five years while she fought to have her name removed from the state's registry of child sex abusers.

But if Carlson's case was not the most scandalous it was nonetheless a landmark. In 1993 and 1994, Carlson and another woman in her M.P.D. group, Vynnette Hamanne, sued Diane Humenansky. Humenansky denied most of their allegations. At the Carlson trial, she testified that she had complied with "the requisite standard of care in all respects." Nevertheless, Carlson was awarded $2.5 million in damages and Hamanne $2.7 million. According to the women's attorneys, Edward Glennon, R. Christopher Barden, and Christopher Yetka, these were the largest jury verdicts ever delivered

SHOWCASE BY MAX VADUKUL

MAKE IT NEW

PERHAPS because Esa-Pekka Salonen is a composer as well as a conductor, the orchestra he commands—the Los Angeles Philharmonic—can give vibrant accounts of canonical works (witness their new recording of Mahler's Third Symphony) and also make the case for classical music as a vigorously contemporary art. Their latest enthusiasm is film music: over the next few years, in a series called Filmharmonic, the orchestra will present collaborations between Hollywood composers and directors. The first project, "1001 Nights," with animated images by Yoshitaka Amano and music by David Newman, has its première on April 30th. This is new ground for Salonen, a thirty-nine-year-old Finn whose musical education was steeped in the esoteric languages of the postwar European avant-garde. Since taking over the Philharmonic, in 1992, he has retuned his modernist world view. "An orchestra is ultimately successful in how it connects to its milieu," he says. "You look around and ask, 'What is most familiar? What is the folklore?' In L.A., it's film. The Vienna Philharmonic plays Johann Strauss, we play Bernard Herrmann." Lest anyone suspect Salonen of abandoning his first principles, he is also pushing György Ligeti, one of the giants of European new music. Over the next two months, the Philharmonic will celebrate Ligeti's seventy-fifth birthday, in a festival that combines his otherworldly soundscapes of the sixties with his free-spirited, crypto-romantic music of the past two decades. The Philharmonic players pictured here, cheering modernity on the roof of L.A.'s Museum of Contemporary Art, are, from left, Elizabeth Cook-Shen, horn player; Bing Wang, violinist; Martin Chalifour, concertmaster; Ben Hong, cellist; Monica Kaenzig, clarinettist; and Patricia Heimerl, bassoonist. Salonen is the trim Finn in front.

—ALEX ROSS

in the United States in a case involving recovered memory. They set an example. Several former patients have filed lawsuits against Bennett Braun, and all but a few have been settled. Patricia Burgus's suit against him and her other therapists was settled last fall for $10.6 million by the insurance companies involved. (Braun objected to the settlement and denied all wrongdoing alleged in this and other suits.) In addition to Carlson and Hamanne, nine other former patients sued Humenansky; all these cases were settled out of court. In two suits she was also accused of having sexual relations with her patients, an allegation she denied. In 1996, her license to practice medicine in the state of Minnesota was suspended indefinitely by the Board of Medical Practice. The report ordering her suspension cites a letter Humenansky sent in her defense: "With respect to the numerous complaints and civil lawsuits filed against her, Respondent blamed those on the 'perpetrators of childhood sexual assault.' "

THE RAT

Not the dapper
bespectacled little grandfather
with quilted silk coat and leather boots

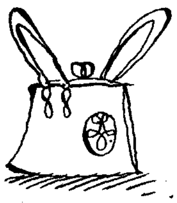
but the long-tailed, appallingly limp
carcass left by the cat in freezing wind.
Neck twisted like a cleaning rag,
mouth leaking syrup,
bead-glass eyes of a doll—

And here are the diligent maggots
scrambling over disquieting continents.

—Frances Padorr Brent

If Carlson didn't have multiple-personality disorder, has anyone ever had it? Every culture has what medical anthropologists call its "idiom of distress." In China and Southeast Asia, there is a serious disorder, koro, in which a man imagines, with terrible dread, that his penis is being retracted into his body. Koro is almost unheard of in the United States, just as anorexia nervosa, said to afflict up to one per cent of young American women, is virtually unheard of in societies where people have koro. Mental disorders also go in and out of vogue. Two hundred years ago, there was a fashion for somnambulism. The somnambulists were said to have otherworldly powers: while sleepwalking, it was reported, they would write poems, swim rivers, walk over rooftops. Today, somnambulism is considered a minor complaint, usually confined to children, who will generally do something quite unremarkable, such as eat a sandwich or go to the bathroom, before returning to bed.

Most psychiatric professionals do seem to believe that multiple-personality disorder is real but that it rarely occurs spontaneously and therefore does not deserve to be a primary-level diagnosis. Like the majority of psychiatric patients, people diagnosed with M.P.D. tend to be "co-morbid"; that is, they meet the diagnostic criteria for more than one disorder. According to one authority, the average M.P.D. patient qualifies for three or four other psychiatric diagnoses (another expert makes it eleven)—typical accompaniment being depression, antisocial personality disorder, and borderline personality disorder. If M.P.D. overlaps so heavily with those disorders, should it be counted as a disorder in its own right? When faced with a patient who is chronically depressed, or who seems to have no sense of responsibility to others (antisocial personality disorder), or who fluctuates between rage and neediness (borderline personality disorder)—all common and serious problems—and who also tends to zone out now and then, why would a diagnostician hone in on the last symptom and start asking questions that nudge the patient toward the historically rare diagnosis of M.P.D.?



M.P.D. is part of the history of hysteria, a disorder in which the patient shows symptoms—usually physical (paralyses, numbness, pain) and sometimes psychological (outbursts, spells)—in the absence of any evident organic cause. That is only half the definition, however. Hysteria has always been regarded as a women's syndrome. (Hence the disorder's name, from the Greek *hystera*, or "uterus.") Hysteria can be traced back four thousand years, but in the late nineteenth century it acquired a new importance, particularly in France. The celebrated Parisian neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot published more than a hundred case histories on the subject, and gave famous lecture-demonstrations in which his patients, under hypnosis, would undergo hysterical attacks. Bookstores sold collections of photographs of hysterics in mid-attack. The number of patients multiplied year by year.

Why did this happen? A number of trends—the rise of neurology, the fad for spiritualism, the whole nineteenth-century cult of the irrational—clearly contributed. Another factor, no doubt, was the new campaign for women's rights. Hysteria was not merely a female complaint; it was widely regarded as a manifestation of women's moral weakness—their deceitfulness, their immaturity, their fusses and tears and attention-seeking. "As a general rule, all women are hysterical," the French physician Auguste Fabre wrote in 1883. "What constitutes the temperament of a woman is rudimentary hysteria." Such theories came in handy as European society in the late nineteenth century was hit by the first great wave of modern feminism. Women couldn't be granted the vote, opponents said. They were irresponsible, hysterical.

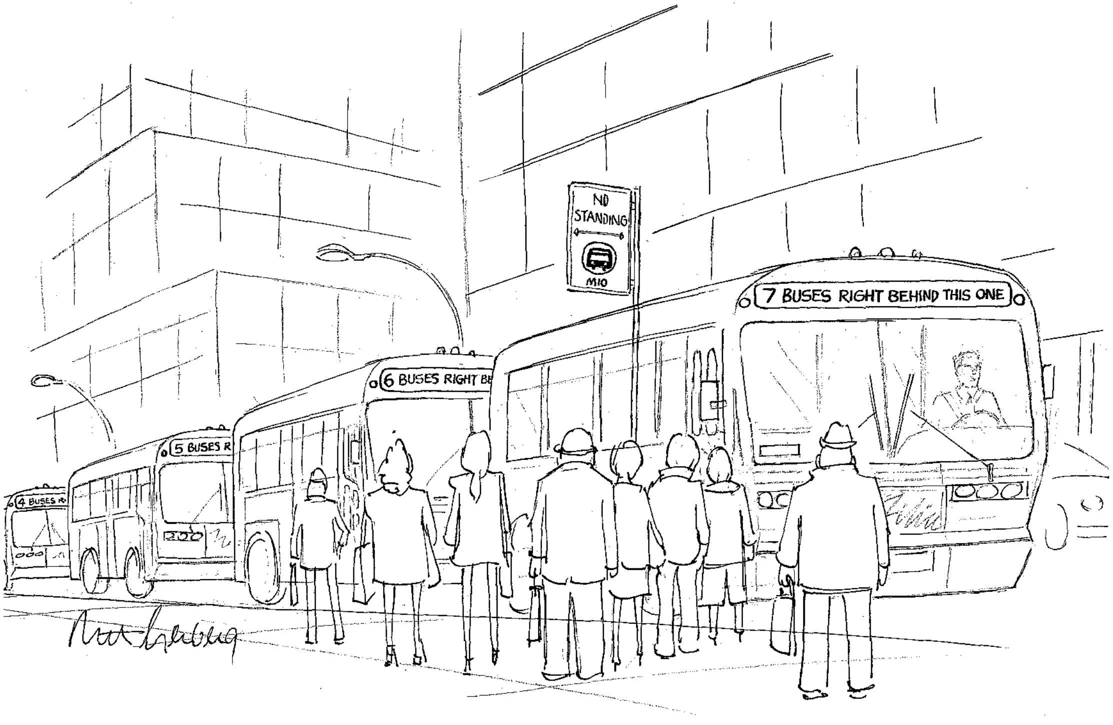
It was during the hysteria fad that M.P.D.—it was called "double consciousness" then—began to receive attention, as a subtype of hysteria. By the turn of the century, however, hysteria began dying out in Europe, and double consciousness with it. Neurosis was being handed over to a new generation—indeed, to one man, Sigmund Freud, and, according to modern M.P.D. enthusiasts, it was Freud who killed M.P.D. He abandoned hypnosis, which was essential to the study of dissociation. He also abandoned dissociation—the idea that memories could be walled off, pristine, in the mind. But that's not all. In his seduction theory—his belief, during the eighteen-nineties, that his patients' hysterias were due to their having been molested as children—he discovered what modern M.P.D. theorists see as the mother lode. And then he walked away from it. He switched theories, from actual seduction to fantasized seduction—in other words, childhood sexuality. As a result, psychoanalysis was born, and, according to M.P.D. adherents, multiple-personality disorder was thrust back into darkness for almost a century.

THE return of M.P.D. began with the child-protection movement in the nineteen-seventies. In 1962, in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, a group of Denver pediatricians, headed by C. Henry Kempe, published an article called "The Battered Child Syndrome," demonstrating via X-rays that very small children had been beaten, presumably by their parents, hard enough to break their bones. This fact, it is now said, had been known to pediatricians for years; only Kempe's group had the stomach to publish it. In any case, it created a furor.

The child-protection movement was quickly joined by feminists, and they gave it a new twist. To Kempe's group, the problem was that children were being physically assaulted. To the feminists, the problem was that female children were being sexually assaulted. Furthermore, as the feminists saw it, this was not something that the society discouraged. In the words of Florence Rush, a social worker, speaking at a New York Radical Feminist Rape Conference in 1971, sexual abuse was a way of teaching a girl "to accept a subordinate role; to feel guilty, ashamed, and to tolerate, through fear, the power exercised over her by men."

Out of this meeting between feminism and the child-protection forces came the recovered-memory, or R.M., movement, spread by so-called "recovery manuals"—notably, "The Courage to Heal," which sold three-quarters of a million copies in its first and second editions. Were you "bathed in a way that felt intrusive to you?" Were you "fondled, kissed, or held in a way that made you uncomfortable?" Then you were an abuse victim. As "The Courage to Heal" defined sexual abuse, these experiences qualified, just like rape. And, once dwelt upon, such memories tended to generate others—for example, rape. By such means, the R.M. movement persuaded hundreds of thousands of women that they were part of a worldwide sisterhood of sex-abuse victims, condemned for the rest of their lives to live out the consequences of the trauma—like survivors of the Holocaust. (It was from the Holocaust victims that the R.M. claimants took their name: they, too, were "survivors.") Many of these women began suing their alleged abusers, and state after state rolled back its statutes of limitations to permit them to do so. Recovered memory was accepted as evidence in criminal trials as well—most famously in California in the 1990 conviction of George Franklin, whose grown daughter Eileen Lipsker suddenly remembered that her father was responsible for the unsolved murder, twenty years earlier, of an eight-year-old friend of hers. (The conviction was later reversed.)

Like M.P.D., the R.M. movement was enthusiastically supported by the media. But even apart from their coverage of the "epidemic," the press, together with television and movies, must be seen as a crucial source of both R.M. and M.P.D. They supplied the imagery for the memories. With the "Freddy" movies around, with rap singers singing about butchering women, what's a little afterbirth-eating? The media supplied alters, too. M.P.D. patients were reporting Mr. Spock alters, Ninja Turtle alters. The very form of the disorder, with its "switching," seemed to come from our fast-cutting visual entertainments. George Ganaway has pointed out the video-game-like quality of M.P.D. therapy: as soon as one layer of alters has been identified and its dark deeds reënacted, another layer would descend, and another, until, as Ganaway put it, "the therapist finally tires of the game or the host personality runs out of quarters." Finally, the entertainment industry gave the R.M./M.P.D. movement its tone, its combination of luridness and piety.



Picasso
Handelsman

"With the whole world in NATO, we won't have to take any more crap from Mars."

• •

Michael Jackson fondling his genitals and singing "Heal the World"—this is the same strange land from which we got R.M./M.P.D. enthusiasts retailing sex stories under the banner of child protection.

But the single most important cause of the epidemic was the culture wars of the eighties and nineties. Oddly, both sides embraced M.P.D. and R.M. To leftists, these traumatic conditions were simply further demonstrations of the victimization of the populace by white males. To the right, the sexual crimes behind R.M. and M.P.D. were surely the results of the new permissiveness that was tearing society apart. The Christian fundamentalists were in the front ranks of the movement. So were the feminists. Feminist therapists began leading groups to help women unearth their abuse memories; they set up workshops to teach other therapists how to spot M.P.D.

At the same time, many people started asking questions about this weird development. If M.P.D. was such a widespread disorder—Colin Ross estimated its prevalence at one per cent, roughly the same as for schizophrenia—why did it show such a narrow distribution, with the vast majority of M.P.D. patients being white, female, and North American? And why were so many of them coming out of the offices of so few therapists, the very ones who were publicizing this new syndrome? Among the early doubters were Corbett Thigpen and Hervey Cleckley, the therapist-authors of "The Three Faces of Eve," back in 1957. Nearly three decades later, Thigpen and Cleckley wrote an article saying that since the publication of "Eve" hundreds of "multiples" had come in or been sent to them by therapists for confirmation of the diagnosis. In all these cases, they said, they had found exactly one true M.P.D.

Then one of Sybil's therapists spoke up: Herbert Spiegel, who had handled Sybil's case when Cornelia Wilbur was out of town. One day, Spiegel says, while he was having a session with Sybil, he asked her a question. "And Sybil said, 'Well, do you want me to be Helen?' I said, 'Why would you think I would want that?' She said, 'Well, when I talk to Dr. Wilbur, when I get to this thing, she wants me to be Helen.' And I said, 'No, you don't have to if you don't want to. I can hear you just as Sybil.' And she said, 'Fine, I'd prefer it that way.' That's when I found out what Connie was doing with this case." Spiegel, who is a hypnosis expert, noted that Sybil was naturally dissociative: she spontaneously entered self-hypnotic trances. And those trances were what Wilbur called Sybil's alters. As Spiegel explains it, "When Sybil got into those states, Connie, who was a psychiatrist—knowing nothing about hypnosis—made it easier for herself to communicate with them by giving them a name." Spiegel adds that when Flora Rheta Schreiber was negotiating with a publisher for the book that was to become "Sybil" she suggested to him that he co-author it with her. He was interested. Then she told him that it was going to be a case history of multiple-personality disorder. "I said to her, 'But Sybil wasn't a multiple personality. Those things were artificial fragments, artificially created by Connie. When Sybil was with me, she didn't have to be those people.' And Schreiber said, 'We have to call it a multiple. That's what the publisher wants. That's what will make it sell.' I said, 'No, thanks.' And, after that, when I saw Connie at conferences she wouldn't speak to me. She looked the other way."

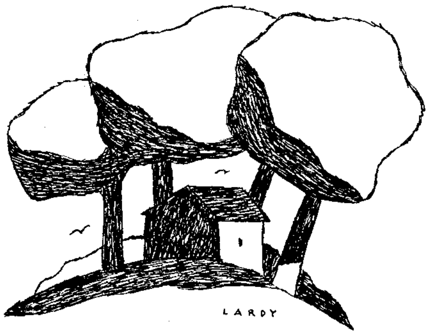
To answer such charges, the M.P.D. treaters needed evidence, in the form of studies showing, for example, that the kind of abuse their patients were alleging—violent abuse, repeated over many years—could in fact be forgotten and then accurately recalled, as was said to be happening in M.P.D. therapy. There was no such evidence. Meanwhile, memory research, a hot field at this time (partly because of R.M.), was demonstrating exactly the opposite: that even for traumatic events memory degrades quickly and is highly inaccurate. Nor, in the vast majority of cases, could the M.P.D. experts show that their patients had ever been sexually abused. Sexual abuse, it must be said, is very hard to prove. Child-molesters do not normally volunteer this information. But very few therapists even looked for corroboration. Most were content to cite the percentage of multiples *alleging* abuse—often after years of abuse-focussed therapy, not to speak of exposure to the recovery manuals. Or they cited figures on the prevalence of "abuse"—that is, physical or sexual. Children are physically abused every day, and by current definitions I and most of my childhood friends would be considered to have a physical-abuse history. (That is, we were spanked often. That was discipline in the fifties.) But, according to the M.P.D. expert Richard Kluft, "M.P.D. is primarily a disorder of sexually abused women." This has never been demonstrated.

Another thing that the M.P.D. people could not prove was that childhood sexual abuse causes any kind of adult psychopathology, let alone M.P.D. Many studies have found that people reporting childhood sexual abuse show higher levels of psychological disturbance, but when the subjects are matched with controls on "family pathology"—that is, when people who come from terrible families that abused them sexually are compared with people who come from families equally terrible except that they didn't abuse them sexually—the two groups' psychopathology rates turn out to be about equal. One 1994 study tried to separate the effects of five kinds of maltreatment: sexual abuse, physical abuse, verbal abuse, emotional neglect, and physical neglect. The findings indicated that the most damaging is emotional neglect. As for sexual abuse, a recent report summarizing many studies says, "A substantial number of these investigations find that a majority of victims suffer no extensive harm."

Many people view this finding with repugnance. So do I. (If only a minority suffer extensive harm, that's still a problem.) According to Ian Hacking, in his 1995 book on M.P.D., "Rewriting the Soul," our discomfort is rooted in "consequentialist ethics," the idea that for something to be bad it must have bad results. Adults who engage children in sex, Hacking says, should be condemned on absolute grounds, regardless of the consequences for the child. Most people would agree with him—I would—but such a position has no bearing on the claim that sexual abuse causes multiple-personality disorder.

If the science behind M.P.D. was poor, that is because M.P.D. was never really part of science. Rather, it was a belief system. In part, R.M./M.P.D. was a liberationist movement, akin to the human-potential movement of the sixties. Bass and Davis, in "The Courage to Heal," advised the reader to dance her feelings. They told her that when she came to terms with her abuse she would release untapped potential that would transform not only her own life but the world: "Imagine all women healed—and all that energy no longer used for mere survival but made available for . . . freeing political prisoners, ending the arms race." Gloria Steinem, in her best-selling book "Revolution from Within," actually sang the praises of M.P.D. as a source of untapped creativity: "People in different alters can . . . perfect a musical or linguistic talent that is concealed to the host personality, have two or even three menstrual cycles in the same body, and handle social and physical tasks of which they literally do not think themselves capable." But liberation had its nastier side, too. According to the feminist therapist-writer Judith Herman, any skepticism regarding abuse reports amounted to "identification with the perpetrator." People asking questions about R.M. and M.P.D. were accused by others of protecting sex criminals. Or, it was suggested, they might *be* sex criminals. And it was this stepped-up passion, this paranoid edge, that made the movement vulnerable to the thing that would finally undo it: the satanic-ritual-abuse, or S.R.A., craze.

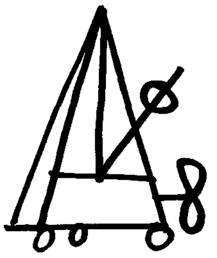
LIKE the M.P.D. movement, the S.R.A. epidemic of the eighties was kicked off by a mass-market book, "Michelle Remembers," by Michelle Smith and Lawrence Pazder. Smith was a Canadian housewife, Pazder the psychiatrist who, in a year's worth of trance sessions, helped her recover her memory of being tortured at age five by a satanic cult. Briefly, the Satanists starved her, vomited on her, sodomized her, electroshocked her, drove her into a rock embankment in an exploding automobile, gave her rubdowns with bloody gobbets of cut-up dead people, dumped her in an open grave and threw dead kittens on her. After a year of this, they let her go, and she forgot the whole thing until her sessions with Dr. Pazder, twenty-two years later. In 1980, Smith and Pazder published their account of this. Later, they divorced their respective spouses and married each other.



In recent years, "Michelle Remembers" has been widely smirked at, but soon after its publication the day-care scandals of the mid-eighties erupted, with children, often under aggressive interrogation, claiming that they had suffered atrocities of the same sort. Before long, adult women were also reporting such memories. In 1983, the F.B.I. initiated a study examining the evidence in more than three hundred alleged crimes by organized cults. Investigators could not find corroboration for a single one. To believers, though, this made little difference. Again, Christian fundamentalists were in the forefront. And, again, many feminists lined up on their side. In 1993, *Ms.* published a story in which a woman described her torture by a cult and asserted that S.R.A. was another arm of the patriarchy. How was it possible for feminists to support a movement so conservative, so alarmed about sex, so concerned with the endangerment of females, who obviously, for their own protection, should not go out in the world and, above all, should never place their children in day care? Well, the eighties was a period of vigorous backlash against feminism. In that tormented context, many feminists clearly felt that any woman alleging abuse, even by a devil with a tail, had to be believed.

In a number of quarters, S.R.A. became part of M.P.D. treatment. Witness Elizabeth Carlson's therapy. Yet there was a big difference between M.P.D. and S.R.A. Though crediting M.P.D. might be hard, the S.R.A. stories—of robed cultists dining on babies, of priests collecting blood, semen, and urine in chalices for group libations—were frankly ludicrous. And this lack of credibility created a crisis in the M.P.D. world. If the believers in M.P.D. defended S.R.A., this would put them in the position of kooks. But if they repudiated the S.R.A. stories they would be casting doubt on everything they had stood for up to then, because the therapeutic procedures that had produced the S.R.A. stories—indeed, in many cases, the patients who had produced the S.R.A. stories—were the same as those that had produced the M.P.D. stories.

Predictably, the moderates walked out, and the hard-liners stayed and took a harder line. Extremism swamped the field. Bennett Braun descried a cult involving the Ku Klux Klan, the neo-Nazis, organized crime, big business, and the military, together with FTD florists. (The flowers sent to his hospitalized patients, Braun said, were color-coded with instructions from the cult: "Pink flowers mean suicide, red means cutting," and so on.) Colin Ross, in a proposal for a book to be called "C.I.A. Mind Control," claimed that the enemy was not Satanists but the C.I.A. He declared that federal agents were programming M.P.D. into children "with specific letter, number and other access codes for contacting alter personalities." Local police forces were supposedly in on the cults. So was Kenneth Lanning, who had headed the F.B.I. study. Reading about these new M.P.D. theories—grand-scale, multinational, with laptop-toting Satanists—one is almost nostalgic for the old-style abuse stories, with Uncle Joe out by the woodshed. At least, they were about human things: sex, weakness, sorrow.



As Nicholas Spanos pointed out in his book on M.P.D., "Multiple Identities and False Memories," the witchcraft panics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries tended to fizzle out in any given community once the accusations spiralled up the social scale and hit people of power. That is what happened with recovered memory. Among the accused was a mathematics professor at the University of Pennsylvania, Peter Freyd. In 1990, Freyd's daughter, Jennifer, a psychology professor at the University of Oregon, claimed that with the help of her therapist she now remembered that her father had molested her throughout her childhood, from fondling at age three to rape at sixteen. (She has never retracted the substance of these accusations.) Peter Freyd denied the charges, and Pamela Freyd—Peter's wife, Jennifer's mother, and also a Ph.D.—got together with a group of psychiatrists and founded the False Memory Syndrome Foundation, to help families faced with such claims. With the aid of publicity in the local press, and with an advisory board including some of the biggest names in American psychology, the foundation converted what for most accused families had been a private disaster into a public scandal, something that they could admit had struck their house. And so they began to fight back.

Meanwhile, criticism of M.P.D. within the profession was mounting at a furious pace. In a 1993 issue of the *Harvard Mental Health Letter*, Paul McHugh, director of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins, called for an immediate end to M.P.D. treatment: "Close the dissociation services and disperse the patients to general psychiatric units. Ignore the alters. Stop talking to them, taking notes on them, and discussing them in staff conferences." The popular press suddenly reversed itself. In 1991, *Time* had published a trusting and righteous article on the new incest-rememberers. Two years later, the magazine printed a cover story entitled "Lies of the Mind," warning that the R.M. movement might do "irreparable damage" to the psychotherapy profession. The TV talk shows began featuring "retractors," as patients repudiating their recovered memories were called, in place of or together with survivors. Public television produced caustic reports on M.P.D., R.M., and S.R.A. Even Hollywood backpedalled. In the most recent M.P.D. movie, the 1996 "Primal Fear," a murderer, having escaped conviction on the ground that he had M.P.D., turns out to have faked the disorder.

But the most dramatic change took place in the courts, as the wave of R.M. suits (patients suing abusers) gave way to an opposing wave of malpractice suits (patients suing therapists). In Springfield, Missouri, there was the case of Beth Rutherford, who in 1993 "remembered" in therapy that her father had repeatedly raped her and forced her into coat-hanger abortions. (The father, a minister, lost his job.) Two years later, a medical examination found Rutherford to be a virgin. In Appleton, Wisconsin, there was Nadean Cool, who in M.P.D. therapy developed a hundred and twenty-six alters, including the devil and a duck. To flush out the devil, Cool's therapist had subjected her to an exorcism, bringing along a fire extinguisher, because, he was quoted as saying, "sometimes Satan leaves rings of fire." (The press had a wonderful time with these stories.) Then, there were the cases against Humenansky, Braun, and others, resulting in multimillion-dollar settlements. As the suits against therapists multiplied, suits against alleged abusers receded, and those that were filed did not fare well: between 1989 and 1996, almost half were dismissed.

Desperate to shake off the scandal, M.P.D. therapists changed the disorder's name. In 1994, in the fourth edition of D.S.M., multiple-personality disorder was unglamorously rechristened "dissociative identity disorder." Other new words followed. "Recovered memory" became "delayed recall." "Satanic ritual abuse" became "sadistic abuse." But these maneuverings were minor compared with the changes in technique. All the procedures that M.P.D. authorities had so enthusiastically recommended—hypnosis, abreactions, alter-probing—they now backed away from. It was like a Presidential campaign: everyone moved to the center. Everyone was afraid of being sued.

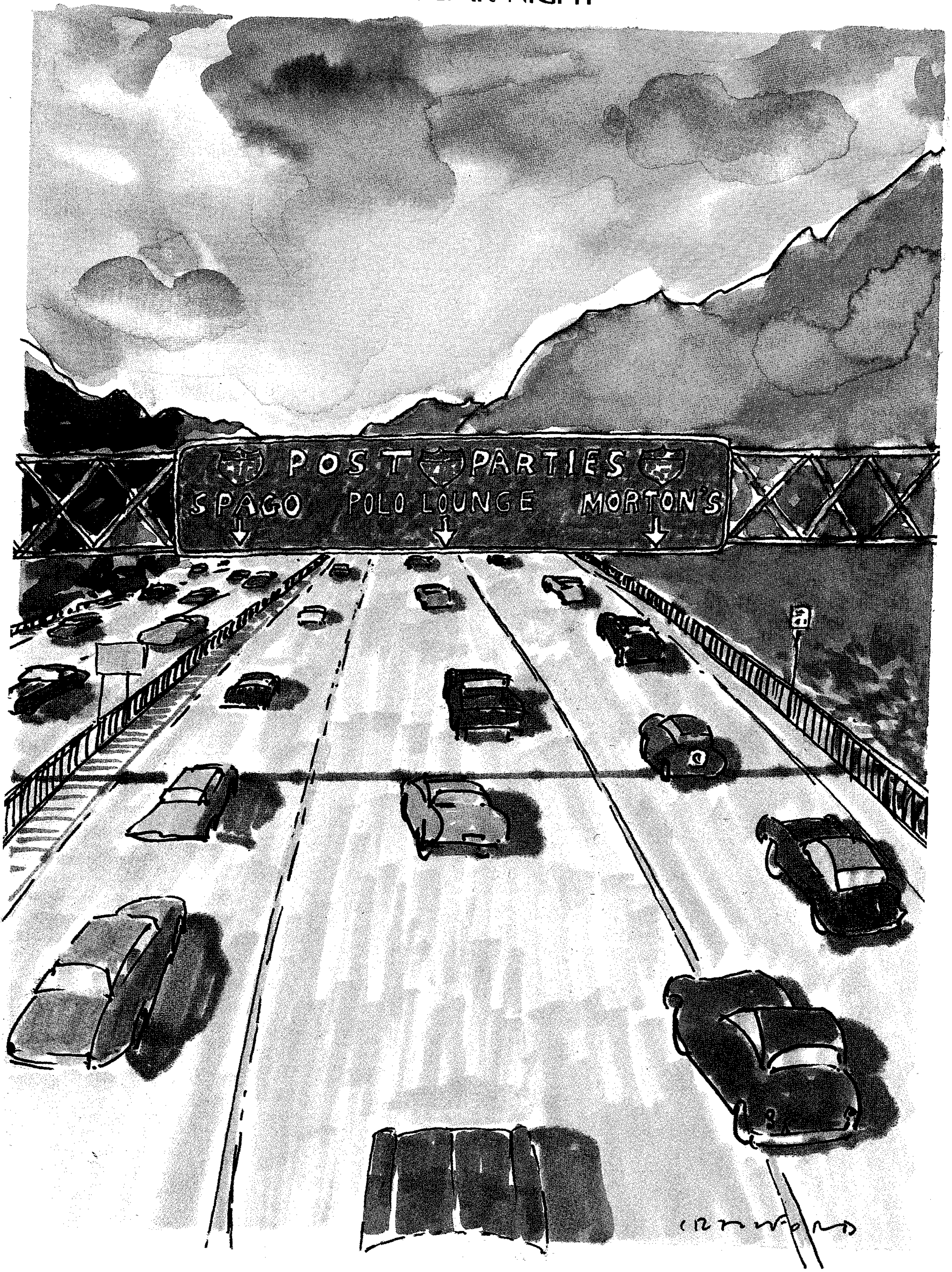
Many therapists objected to this backpedalling, regarding it as cowardice. In a recent essay, the psychoanalyst Sue Grand describes her reaction when a patient voiced a suspicion that she had been a victim of incest. Instead of just worrying about the patient, Grand began worrying about herself as well:

> I will be implicated. Financially ruined, professionally humiliated. I am a little girl, terrorized, with a shameful secret. Even as she weeps, she does not yet know, but she has lost me. I hear the howls of judicial accusation: Have I suggested this? How can I demonstrate that I haven't? Should I start taping to protect myself, and how to explain this to the patient? . . . Suddenly I feel I must demonstrate to the patient that these [incest] images may be more symbolic than literal.

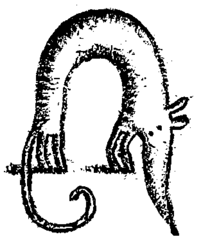
What if this patient *was* abused and never finds out? Is that worse than for

SKETCHBOOK BY MICHAEL CRAWFORD

OSCAR NIGHT


POST PARTIES
SPAGO
POLO LOUNGE
MORTON'S
CRAWFORD

thousands of others to "find out" they were abused when they weren't? Therapists are now choosing the side of caution, and as they do so M.P.D. will die, for it depends on procedures that caution forbids. Actually, it is dying already. Many of the dissociative-disorder units, including Braun's unit at Rush, have closed. The I.S.S.M.P. & D., though it, too, was hygienically renamed—the International Society for the Study of Dissociation—has lost more than a third of its membership in the last five years.



It is hard to tell, though, whether the cause of all this retrenchment was the lawsuits or medical cost-cutting, for the two happened at the same time. Ten years ago, my health insurance covered eighty per cent of the costs of psychotherapy, with the number of sessions to be agreed upon between the therapist and the insurance company. Today, my plan pays fifty per cent of the cost of twenty sessions per year, period. Classic M.P.D. therapy, as described by Frank Putnam, required two to three extended (hour-and-a-half) sessions per week—the equivalent of two hundred standard sessions per year—for one to five years. I could never afford to have M.P.D., and, these days, neither can most other people.

The M.P.D. movement will not die, however, without leaving its mark on psychotherapy. The whole trend in psychological treatment in the last twenty years has been away from the long-term, Freud-based, childhood-examining "insight" therapy and toward either drug treatment or a new, short-term "cognitive-behavioral" therapy, in which, for maybe ten or fifteen sessions, patients address their present-day problems. This change has been hard on many therapists. They went to school to study the deep reaches of the mind; they graduated into a field that was about Prozac and assertiveness training. Then came managed care, with therapists in some states averaging a fifty-per-cent loss of income. The growth of the M.P.D. diagnosis must be understood within this context. It cannot be said (though it has been) that most M.P.D. therapists went after this disorder for financial reasons; philosophical reasons surely played a part. But, either way, a disorder that required two hundred sessions of psychotherapy per year and focussed on the old themes, the great themes—passion, betrayal, memory, identity—was not unattractive.

If M.P.D. was supposed to rescue insight therapy, it did the opposite: it covered insight therapy with shame. Therapists had long known that what their patients told them was not necessarily "historical truth." Their job, they said, was to help the patient construct a "narrative truth"—a life story that he or she could live with productively. But once therapists decided that vast numbers of women really had been sexually assaulted by their fathers, and once those women began suing their fathers, narrative truth was not O.K. anymore. One needed historical truth.

Many therapists, foreseeing this problem, counselled their patients against suing their alleged abusers, even against confronting them. Other therapists, particularly the feminists, did not approve of this policy. Their faith was stronger. Furthermore, they believed in the criminal-justice system, and they reasoned that child-molesting was not going to stop until the guilty were accused and punished. Unfortunately, they also encouraged women to construct abuse claims on the flimsiest of foundations. Still, their position is easier to understand than that of clinicians who simply sat and said "Tell me more" as patients recounted stories of hideous sufferings at the hands of child-molesters—and, indeed, murderers—who were supposedly still on the loose. It looked as though the M.P.D. therapists, while allowing insurance companies to pay them to listen, did not in fact believe the stories. In other words, M.P.D. therapy looked like a racket—which is what Herbert Spiegel has called it.

Freud has been under attack for decades now, and the M.P.D. scandal fuelled the fire. Frederick Crews, in his 1995 book "The Memory Wars," demonstrated that the coercive techniques used by the M.P.D. therapists, not to speak of their notion of "repressed memory," came directly from Freud. Meanwhile, defenders of psychoanalysis, such as George Ganaway, argued that recovered-memory therapy was simply a "kidnapping" of Freud, a betrayal of his ideas. Actually, there is a great deal of good insight therapy going on across this land, with decent-minded professionals, many of them far removed from Freudian theory, helping people handle problems that they can discuss with no one else. These therapists looked on with bewilderment at the R.M./M.P.D. scandal. More of them should have spoken up. The American Psychological Association has yet to issue any firm warning against R.M. therapy. In their place, others have taken action. In 1995, Christopher Barden, who is Carlson's attorney (and also a psychologist), began circulating to the federal and state legislatures a proposal for a new law, the Truth and Responsibility in Mental Health Practices Act, which would read as follows: "No tax or tax exempt monies may be used for any form of health care treatment, including any form of psychotherapy, that has not been proven safe and effective by rigorous, valid and reliable scientific investigations and accepted as safe and effective by a substantial majority of the relevant scientific community." Barden told me, "If these people want to set up booths outside astrology stores, that's fine. But there is no reason why a farmer in Kansas should send his tax dollars to Washington to pay them."

M.P.D. is a disorder that involves the gravest possible social problems—the oppression of women, the mistreatment of children, poverty—and by translating those problems into purely personal matters it has defused them politically. With "The Courage to Heal" including every pat on the fanny under child-molesting, the claims of widespread abuse came to seem absurd—"abuse excuse"—and, as a result, genuine cases were cast into doubt.

Apart from sexual molestation, the M.P.D. writers barely mention social issues. Physical abuse of children is far more common than sexual abuse. As for poverty, study after study has shown its high correlation with child abuse, yet it is rarely spoken of in the R.M./M.P.D. literature. Lack of money, of course, affects not only a girl's risk of being abused but her chance of getting over it. Dara Culhane, a medical anthropologist interviewed in Carol Tavris's "The Mismeasure of Woman," says that, according to her information, middle-class survivors of childhood sexual abuse generally recover well, whereas their poorer counterparts tend to drift into alcohol and drug abuse. So why, Culhane asks, is the problem said to be sexual abuse rather than poverty?

But the cause that was most damaged was feminism. Like hysteria in the nineteenth century, M.P.D. erupted in the twentieth century at the same time as a bitter struggle for women's rights. And, like hysteria, it was an excellent argument against women's rights. Point for point, M.P.D. repeats the old weak-woman stereotype. In the alternating personalities, we have woman's notorious volatility ("La donna è mobile"). In the contest between the child alters and the hussy alters, we have the Madonna/whore split. With the amnesia and the involuntary switching, we have woman's long-recognized moral incapacity—the notion that she cannot be held responsible for her behavior. In the hidden cause, the childhood sexual trauma, we get further essential components of femininity. Women are childlike, passive, wounded. Above all, women are sex; they are what's between their legs. Meanwhile, in the therapy, with its relentless focus on the patient's feelings, we have woman's famous subjectivity, her preference for emotion over action, her status as a creature of phone calls and girl talk. More than a disorder, M.P.D. is a memory—a memory of women, invoked by men. (Apart from Cornelia Wilbur, who died six years ago, all the major M.P.D. theorists have been male.) On the cover of "Michelle Remembers" is a little blue-eyed girl, hugging her doll, and smack in the middle is a shot of the child's little crotch. The artist is looking up the dress of a five-year-old. For a very long time, the most advantageous thing a woman could be in our society was childlike and sexual at the same time, and that is the state to which multiple-personality disorder restores her. The M.P.D. diagnosis is a tradeoff. The patient forfeits the privileges of being an adult—self-knowledge, moral agency. In return she is given back the sex-child dream, the cotton panties of yesteryear.

If one were so minded, one might suggest that M.P.D. was an anti-feminist conspiracy. But it was less a conspiracy than a reflex of our current politics. Year after year, disadvantaged groups knock on the door of the society, protesting their position. The society offers reparation. Some mechanisms of reparation—affirmative action, for example—are practical and useful, aimed at giving the group a genuine place in the world, but they take effect slowly. In the interim, other consolations are offered, such as the idea that the society works not by one set of truths but by many, and that every group is entitled to its own "narrative." Fed this fantasy, the disadvantaged group goes off and makes up its narrative, until, very soon, the story becomes too extravagant. At that point, it is attacked, and then the situation becomes clear: that in this promise of an alternative truth what the disadvantaged were given was not a place in the world but a sort of refugee camp, where they could go on dreaming the same dreams as before, based on their history of powerlessness.

As I was finishing this account, I again asked for an interview with Diane Humenansky, and she again declined. According to her lawyer's office, she does not want further publicity.

Shortly after her lawsuit was concluded, Elizabeth Carlson was diagnosed with lupus. Taking her two children (her marriage had now ended), she moved to Florida. There she was also diagnosed with a degenerative joint disorder and a debilitating rheumatic condition. A few months ago, she had a small stroke. When she goes out, she has to use a wheelchair. She is forty-four. I asked her whether she blames herself for her M.P.D.-therapy disaster. "No," she replied. "Or not anymore. It could have happened to anyone. But I'm not as naïve as I used to be about trusting professionals." In 1993, she founded the National Association Against Fraud in Psychotherapy, and despite her health problems she still works, counselling retractors and accused families. ♦

AWNING
FOR
CUSTOMER
USE
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PROFILE

THE IZZARD KING

Can Eddie Izzard, a comedian with a cult following in England, become America's next favorite Brit?

BY JOHN LAHR

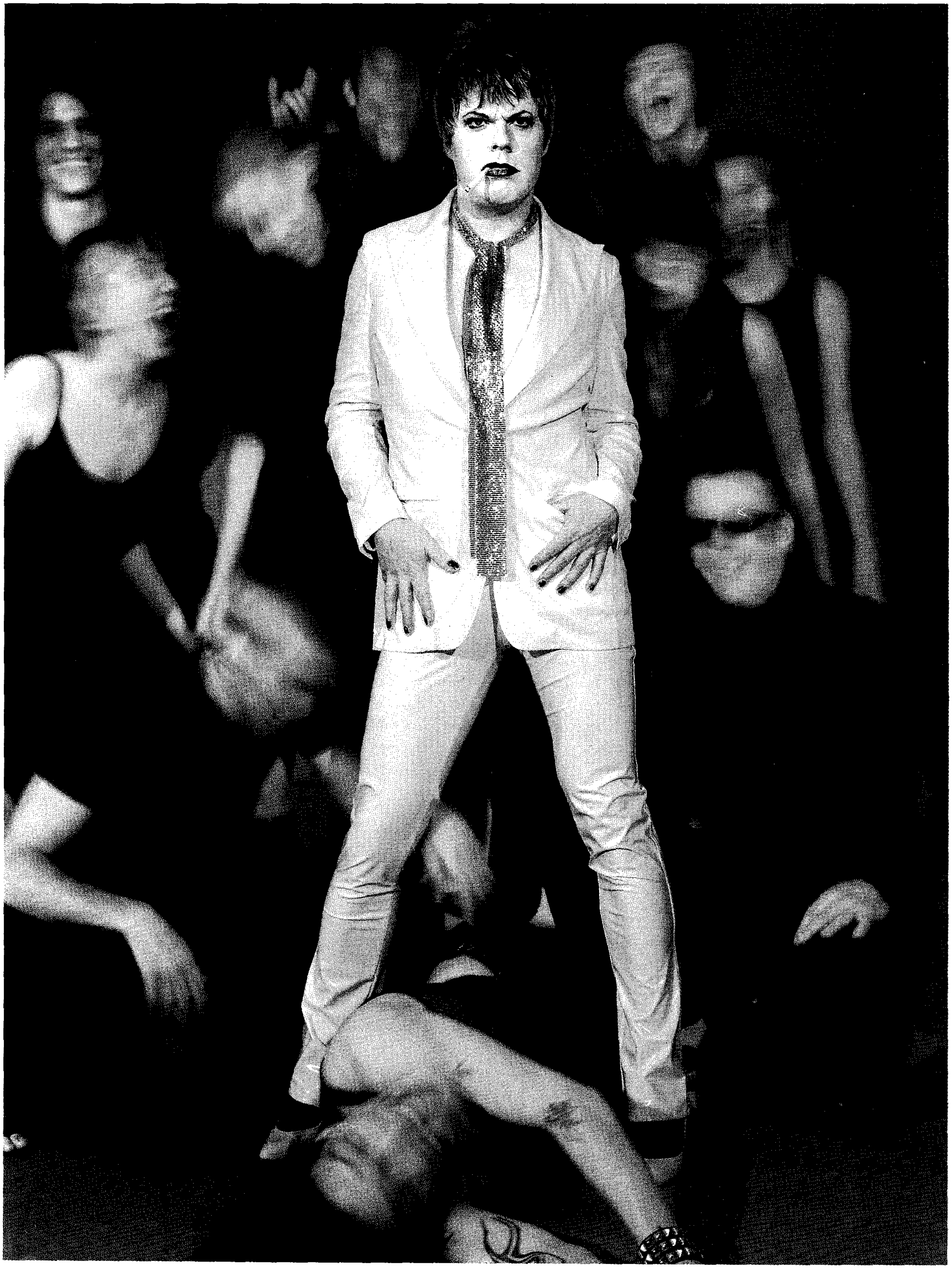
On an unseasonably warm February afternoon in Toronto, the British comedian Eddie Izzard, dressed in a blue Lycra "rave shirt," took out a Psion organizer from his backpack, pecked at the keyboard with a finger whose nail was haphazardly varnished a deep purple, and scrolled through some comic notions that over the next few months will probably find themselves worked into the crazy flow of his new act:

- The Grim Reaper has been around since the dawn of time. Scythes however were only invented after the Iron Age. Before that did the Grim Reaper just have a club? A Grim Clubber?
- Talk about bees and their wily ways / Do speech as an Australian who thinks he's President of Austria because he's dyslexic.
- What's the point of being in the Merchant Navy? Lots of discipline and no guns or fancy uniform. Typical thing they must say would be, "I want to take potatoes to dangerous places."

Izzard was in Toronto on the second stop of his "Dress to Kill" tour, which would go on to the U.S. Comedy Arts Festival in Aspen and then to New York's Westbeth Theatre Center, where it's now playing. At thirty-six, he is something of a cult figure in England, and is the first comedy act to make the difficult passage across the Atlantic since Dudley Moore and Peter Cook achieved it, in the early seventies. But Izzard, who has a mop of highlighted blond hair and a short, stocky body, considers himself "a very lazy person with huge drive," which is why he fakes himself out by doing so many comedy gigs, West End acting assignments (the world première of David Mamet's "The Cryptogram," Marlowe's "Edward II"), and now screen roles (this year, he can be seen playing opposite Sean Connery in "The Avengers"). He says, "Even my standup is designed for the laziest way of doing standup. I don't write it. I just go on stage and go." For him, it's an out-of-mind experience. "My mouth and my mind are not in control of me," he says. "I'm not driving; I just let go." In "Dress to Kill," his nonsense manages to touch on the space program, James I, the Gunpowder Plot, established versus pagan religions, sci-fi movies, astronomy, anthropology, and computers, to name but a few topics. Izzard's imaginative high-wire act, a kind of standup equivalent of skydiving ("It feels like flying around in the air, just swooping and diving, being on top of it"), is tense, and games are more fun when they are tense. To the Monty Python veteran John Cleese, who has called Izzard "the funniest man in England," the prospect of performing this kind of theatrical free fall "is more or less like being taken away by the Gestapo into a dark room."

Izzard, for his part, grew up listening to the Pythons and has committed many of their routines to memory; he and a friend used to recite variations of the "Four Yorkshiremen" sketch, to pass the dead time in chemistry class. ("We never had a house. We lived in one corridor." "Oh, we used to dream of a corridor. We lived in a shoebox in the middle of the road.") But, unlike the Pythons, who went from university into theatre and television, he is a college dropout who got his comedy experience as a street performer, and became a masterly purveyor of what in the trade is called "comedy bollocks"—or, as he explains his particular brand, "take highbrow stuff, well researched, then talk shit about it." In his busking days (he worked as part of a double act in London for about four years before briefly going solo on the street, in 1987), he "learned to be able to talk and talk and talk and just not stop." He ad-libbed to audiences as he performed a water-evaporation trick, escaped from a woolly jumper while handcuffed and riding a unicycle, and engaged in heavy-duty sword fighting. ("Our deaths for your entertainment" was the shill.) Izzard still improvises and expands his comedy material with his public. When an idea registers—he calls this "hitting funny"—he makes a mental note and adjusts the moment when he relives it the next night. No contemporary comedian is more adroit at calling the audience into play—something he learned to do in those early street days, when he had to work hard to "get an audience together." He used to set out a series of tea cozies in the shape of various animals. "They were very visual. People would look at them and think something was going to happen to them," he says. "I'd take ages to put them out. I wouldn't do anything with them, except this one thing where I'd say, 'This is a boomerang hippopotamus. Wherever I throw it, it will come back.'" He would then throw the hippo tea cozy outside the ring of spectators. "I'd repeat, 'Wherever I throw it, the hippopotamus always comes back,'" he says. "By this time, somebody got the hang of it and chucked it back. 'I told you it always comes back!' I could always get it through to people." He adds, "If they play with me, it makes it work, and everyone's happy."

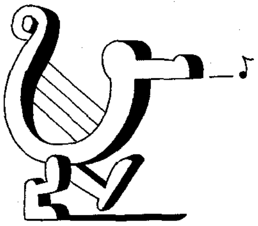
Izzard does not tell gags; he does not have a written "routine"; he rarely invades his own privacy for material; he does not attack the audience, or, conversely, try to "dig it up," as comedians say ("Who here is from . . . ?"). "I just want to fuck around, take the audience one way, then back up on it," he says, likening the madcap mosaic of mind which he delivers to channel surfing. In "Dress to Kill," for instance, he goes into a riff about the stiffness of British movies between the thirties and the fifties ("Dar-



Izzard is a masterly purveyor of comedy bollocks: "Take highbrow stuff, then talk shit about it." Photograph by Max Vadukul.

ling, I'm off to the war." "Oh, don't go, darling, it's so noisy") and observes that all the regional characters and even the working classes seem to speak in the Received Pronunciation of the upper orders. ("I must go, darling," he says in plummy tones. "It's my duty as a Cockney man. As a man of Cockney persuasion. I was born within five inches of Bow Bells. Ding dong, ding dong.") And that leads him to an imitation of Dick Van Dyke's mangled Cockney in "Mary Poppins." "He's dead, you know," Izzard says about Van Dyke, bursting the bubble of laughter. Then he shakes his head. "No, he's not." He pauses and continues, "He is . . . No . . . He is . . . No." At each volte-face, which he delivers with either a dour shake of the head or a smile, the audience's energy switches back and forth between worry and delight.

Izzard has about him the whiff of comic greatness but none of the presenting symptoms of most inspired funnymen. He is not morose, or aggressive, or chronically insecure. "He's always been a good bloke," says the director Stephen Daldry, who was directing plays at Sheffield University when Izzard, after being kicked out of his first-year accounting course, was hanging around the Student Union and developing such alternative epics as "Fringe Flung Lunch," "Sherlock Holmes Sings Country," and "World War II: The Sequel," which he ultimately took to the Edinburgh Festival. Daldry adds, "There's never been any edge to him."



But there is one thing that sets Izzard apart. He is a transvestite. He sees himself not as "trapped" in a man's body but as a male lesbian, "happily cohabiting." He's not polemical about it. "I'm not saying anyone else needs to do this," he explains. "I'm just saying this is me. If you don't like it you can piss off, 'cause this is my life." In the opening minutes of "Dress to Kill," he laughs the issue off the stage. "I'm a male transvestite, and I fancy women," he says. "I don't know why. I'm open for fancying men, but I can't get my head around that. Which makes me think it's a genetic thing. No particular choice there." He goes on, "So, male tomboy . . . That's really where I am. Running. Jumping. Climbing trees. Then putting on makeup when I was up there."

YOUR COLOR

More in some ways than when you were alive, I try to
please you,
to find I am of your way of
thinking, as with these red carnations:
they're your color.
For myself I'd always
chosen white, saying—
that red's too strong for thinking
in a room, too much.
But now I love these flowers,
having grown, these years ("mourning" they said),
more into what you wished:
a clearer form now, seeing
this redness (suspended) above green stems as
thumbprints of Mediterranean earth that
you belong to, crop of a heart's blood on
this city's grayness,
this room's whiteness.

—Hilda Morley
(1916-1998)

When Izzard is offstage, during the day, only his painted nails signal his bias; at night, his eyeliner, makeup foundation, and lipstick hardly draw attention to him as he strides out of the hotel in civilian clothes toward the Harbourfront Centre, where he's playing. Onstage, however, his costume is a glamorous Jean-Paul Gaultier "mandarin smock," black polyvinyl pants, and leather boots with blocky two-inch-high heels, which give him a kind of streamlined, raffish, almost Restoration look. "I've got this whole thing that in fact there are no transvestites," he says, seated in full regalia in the drab dressing room. "If women aren't transvestite when they wear all of men's clothes—flat shoes, men's jackets, no makeup, short hair—well, there's no bloody line." He adds, "They can have the option. Now I have the option. I have carved that for myself. I consider myself my own role model."

Izzard, who lives in a semi-detached Notting Hill Gate house, where he socializes with a wide range of female and male friends, has been aware of his predilection for women's clothes since the age of five. (He describes his two biggest passions as "soccer and makeup.") His father, John, says, "I remember his mother telling me Eddie dressed up in her clothes as a small child. It didn't worry either of us." He adds, "You didn't do the discipline bit with Eddie. He had to be far more gently handled than his brother." At fifteen, Izzard was caught stealing lipstick; he claimed that it was for a French girlfriend. He didn't come out as a transvestite until he was twenty-three. "It scared the shit out of me," he says. "Way off the scale. I kept thinking, Why am I doing this? What is driving it? I had to lie in darkened rooms with the curtains closed and spend time getting into my head where my head didn't want to go. Your mind builds up brick walls. And I had to tear them down."

Around 1985, he joined a transvestite-transsexual support group in Islington. At first, when he was trying to pass for a woman, he took the name Susan, and studied female mannerisms and walks. But Izzard's looks were "too blokey"; after a while, he asked the group to stop calling him Susan. "I thought, No, I'm Eddie. I'm gonna be Eddie. I'm just gonna go out and be me."

His "boyish-girlish" tomboy look gradually evolved, and he learned to challenge the eyes of others with calmness. He has often recounted an incident "where I had one guy trying to beat me up and another trying to get my autograph. One was yelling, 'You gay twat!' and his friend was saying, 'Wow! You're Eddie Izzard.' And I'm saying, 'No, I'm not a gay twat. I'm a transvestite. Get your slander correct.' "

"All I've got to do is to exist in a brave way," Izzard says, and his comedy allows him to accomplish this elegantly. In fact, even though he has a few jokes about it, his otherness is quite forgotten within minutes of his taking the stage. Like the camouflage of a species that has successfully adapted to its environment, Izzard's look blends imperceptibly with his laughter.

IZZARD doesn't come onstage as if shot from a gun. He sort of shambles out, pitched slightly forward in his high-heeled boots, with his blue eyes shining and his shoulders in a sailor's nonchalant roll. He once began his act by making strange guttural sounds, and he still does a lot of preliminary "uhm"ing and "ah"ing, a technique his fellow-comedians call "Eddying." He stands slightly pigeon-toed, bending a bit at the knees—a loosey-goosey correlative for the millennial confusions about mind and body.

On the night I saw the Toronto show, Izzard was cooking. He was acting out his meditation on the discovery of random dinosaur bones ("How were these dinosaurs dying? Were they going 'I'm near death. I'll be leaving an arm over there. A jawbone over there. My bum in a hedge—ha-ha, that'll fuck off the paleontologists'?") when a statuesque young woman walked slowly down the aisle and came to the lip of the stage while he was in full swing. She held out a beer and a pint glass. "I got you a beer," she said.

"You got me a beer?"

"You looked thirsty." She poured the beer out slowly.

"There's a thing called timing," Izzard said. By now the auditorium was roaring.

"You can drink it later." She pushed the beer toward him.

"All right. All right," he said, moving the beer upstage. "Thank you." He turned back to the audience. "You don't get that in Shakespeare, do you? Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio. We, uh, we had a beer together." Then, pivoting from one side of the stage to the other, Izzard started to dispute himself. " 'You never fucking knew me.' 'I did!' " Somebody called out for him to drink the beer. "Not now," he said. "Not now. Later I can drink a beer."

"Go ahead," a woman called up from the first row.

"Well, no, it's not a beer show: 'Eddie Izzard Drinks a Beer.' "

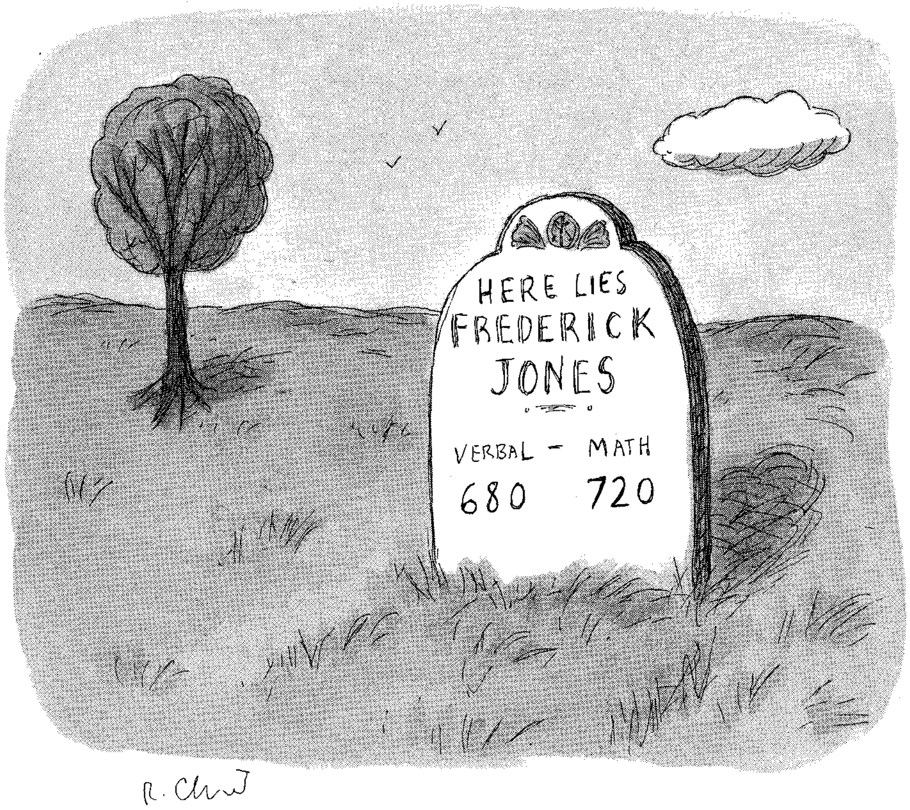
"It's Canada! Enjoy it!" the woman shouted. Izzard demurred.

"Then pass it over here," she said. Izzard brought the beer center stage. "You have to come and get it if you want it," he said, shifting down to a sexy register. "If you're brave enough to come up here."

On occasions when he is interrupted and has to talk to an audience, his brain, he says, is "almost like a split screen," on which he can play and "work things out at the same time." Once, at the opening of his show "Definite Article," in London, a button of his jacket popped off. Someone threw a sewing kit on the stage, and Izzard, talking all the while, threaded a needle and sewed on the button. "If I'd failed to sew it on, that would have been seen as a real psychological failure," he explains. "I thought, As long as I sew it on, I'm fine, I can't really lose. I needed to keep the energy going." On this night, with the beer as with the button, Izzard, feeling the imperative of the audience's collective will, picked up the glass and chugged down the beer in one gulp.

"Please have a seat. Mr. Thorndyke will be back shortly."

IZZARD'S special way of playing is, he says, "a childlike thing that I locked in after six, which is when my mother died and which I wanted to keep hold of." He adds, "There's a kid there that comes in and plays onstage." His company, Ella Communications, is named after Dorothy Ella Izzard, who died of cancer at the age of forty-one. (Izzard was born in Yemen; the family was relocated to Bangor, in Northern Ireland; and after Dorothy's death her husband, who was an accountant for British Petroleum and rose to be chief auditor, settled at Bexhill-on-Sea.) Izzard has very few clear memories of his mother, who was a nurse and midwife and was devoted to Eddie and his older brother. "She was very understanding. I remember I would demand glasses of water and cups of milky coffee in the middle of the night. She'd get up and make them," he says. "She was great, and I didn't want her to go away." In fact, Izzard didn't know that his mother was dying. "I just thought she was ill and would get better," he says. "Then you come home one day, and she isn't there, and you don't see her



ever again." Izzard's transvestism is a way of keeping his mother in mind. According to Stephen Grosz, an American psychoanalyst living in England, who has worked with transvestites, "There's an underlying belief that the mother has everything; and so by becoming the mother you've then lost all need, all want." Izzard stands before an audience as both man and woman, father and mother. As he jokes, "I'd be the perfect one-parent family."

But in reality the death of his mother virtually shattered the family: the boys were sent away to a series of boarding schools. The first school, St. John's, was in Porthcawl, Wales. "It had caning and no sweets," says Izzard, who sang "Jingle Bells" to himself to go to sleep at night. "I found chewing gum in a hedge and cleaned it up and ate that." He adds, "It was a lot of crying." At boarding school, he says, "I learned to close down emotionally." Later, as a teen-ager, when he discovered he could chip in funny words to complete his chemistry teacher's slow sentences ("My hit rate was one in five"), he found a way to banish gravity; he also found a public ("I became popular"). He says, "I think it links up with Mum. She suddenly disappeared. All this big-hearted affection disappears. It's an affection-replacement thing."

Izzard, who was sixteen when he decided to become a performer, thinks that performing for love is a good trade-off. "You do have to give. You can't just stand there and they give it to you," he says. "You go out and you perform your heart out." There is a kind of fierceness in his focus on an audience. "They gotta commit, big time," he says, choosing his verb carefully. "Or just bugger off." The primary appeal of his act is "to make myself laugh," he says. "The second one is to make them laugh." Izzard's laughter engineers a kind of emotional equipoise in him—it's about having all the information and yet not really knowing anything. His humor, he explains, "is informed but not informed." He's aware that in life, as he puts it, "shit happens. There is no answer." This is reflected in his act, where history begins in earnest and ends in fiasco: "Easter. There's a ceremony. It's got a pagan ceremony just sitting underneath it. Easter. Tough time for Jesus. Not a happy lad. All the disciples there saying, 'He's dead. Our leader is dead. How will we remember this day?' . . . 'Well, uh, I was thinking chocolate eggs. That could work.' 'Wrapped up in crinkly paper?' 'Yes, and you can put more chocolate inside when you open it up. A second amount of chocolate is inside!' 'Very good, Zebedee.' (One of them's called Zebedee.) 'Yes, that's it! And a bunny rabbit shall give it out. A bunny rabbit! With big ears, for the bunny rabbit will be the symbol. For when the ears are down and out, it is a cross.' "

A GENTLE snow was falling when I rolled into Aspen around dusk, a week after Izzard's Toronto gig. The town was full of city folks who were spending the week listening to comedians and honoring the giants of the craft, including Larry Gelbart, the cast of "Cheers," and the cast of "Monty Python's Flying Circus," whom HBO had flown over to be reunited on stage for the first time in almost two decades, in a show taped at the Wheeler Opera House, a local Victorian theatre. At night, the silence of the mountain world and the snow-silted frontier storefronts that had been turned into designer boutiques gave the place a dreamy sense of unreality. Izzard, who had spent most of the day snow-boarding and had banged his head, also seemed a bit dazed, but not from his fall. Almost the first words out of his mouth were "I've just been asked to do something at the top of the Python show. I can't believe it. I'm talking to Michael Palin about the Huguenots. I'm going with Palin and Terry Jones and Eric Idle to Steve Martin's one-act plays. I can't really take it in."

He was at the Python rehearsal promptly at two-forty-five the next afternoon, his backpack crammed with ski clothes for a gag that the Pythons were cooking up. The Flying Circus team, including the ponytailed Terry Gilliam (the American cartoonist who has since become a director) and a mock urn containing the "ashes" of the late funnyman Graham Chapman, were already up onstage and seated in a row of lounge chairs like so many smiling trophies. A scrum of TV technicians, talking continually into headsets, surrounded the troupe, who kept up a show of professional jollity while lights and furniture were being adjusted around them. Izzard was standing in the aisle admiring the spectacle when a functionary came up to him and told him he'd just won the festival's Amstel Light jury prize for best one-person show. Izzard turned the moment into a little comedy. ("I've never won anything, really," he lied. "I'm casually bitter about it, but in a very relaxed way.") Then, tentatively, he joined the hubbub, moving across the stage to the far right, where John Cleese, the grandee of the group, was sitting and inhaling oxygen as an antidote to the thin Colorado air. At the sight of Izzard, Cleese put down his mask, hauled his famously gangly six-foot-five torso to its feet, and sort of beckoned Eddie into his outstretched arms. On royal occasions, such moments of conferring honor are called "elevation," but the embrace of the Old Turk and the Young Turk seemed to confirm the Pythons as much in their power as it did Izzard in his. "They've decided to give me an award for being British," Izzard told Cleese, who laughed. "You've got one for being British, too."

"Eddie, I'm English, in case you hadn't noticed."

"Well, I'm Yemenese, really."

"A Yemeni comic. I'd forgotten that."

Cleese quickly got down to business, suggesting that Izzard come onstage as an impostor at the opening of their segment—that he insinuate himself among the Pythons and start answering out of turn when the interviewer, the comedian Robert Klein, began questioning them. "We come on without you the first time. There's one too few chairs. We then go off, and then come back on slightly chaotically. You should come on at that point. In-ski up, you see what I mean. With your own chair. You should put it down and sit there. After we begin, you answer. Make up any fucking rubbish you like. Then we come over and unmask you and tell you to piss off. We'd like you to go down the stairs there." Cleese pointed to the carpeted red stairs that led into the auditorium and down the aisle.

Once the issue of Izzard's costume was resolved—"We had a bad idea," Cleese admitted, after everyone agreed that to put Izzard in ski clothes would give away the gag too early—they got down to just what Izzard would say when Klein opened the discussion by asking the Pythons how the group first met. "I'll just take it," Izzard said. " 'I met John on a train and Michael was the ticket-taker. Terry was doing a train robbery down the other end with Eric.' " Cleese wheezed with laughter and took another slug of oxygen.

The Pythons and Izzard were ordered into the wings to practice their entrance. The crepuscular gloom seemed to liberate a bit of boyish excitement in the cluster of Merry-Andrews. "So I'll be the nutter fan who's trying to break in," Izzard said. "I'll just try walking in behind everybody." Cleese was telling Gilliam to go on first, and Palin was dibbing last. "I've gotta work out a Last-Going-On Performance. Get a laugh early," he said. Jones giggled. Gilliam groused. Idle mumbled to no one in particular, "This is an improv. This is a Python improv."

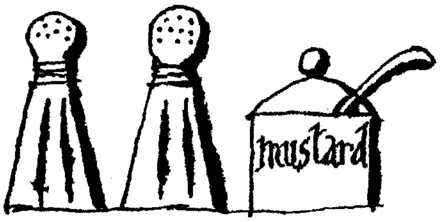
After deciding on their entrance, they practiced Izzard's exit. "We'll let you go on a bit longer," Jones said.

"If I get into it," Izzard said.

"We'll play it off the audience," Cleese called out as Izzard started to improvise the "Four Yorkshiremen." The Pythons stood watching Izzard carry on, their eyes as bright with delight as his. Afterward, he slumped back into a chair between Gilliam and Cleese. "Not exactly what I thought I'd be doing yesterday morning," he said to Cleese. "Being in Aspen. Being with you guys. Doing this." As he left the rehearsal, he said, "If I get too overawed, I'm fucked. I've just got to go on like I was at college again. And they were at college. And fuck about."

On the night, Izzard showed no sign of nerves. He strolled from dressing room to dressing room chatting up his idols before showtime. When Izzard was a student at Sheffield, he had once interviewed Palin for the university paper; now he and Palin were standing in the corridor talking about how you handle hecklers. " 'Say something funny' or 'Boring' are the two worst ones that you can get," Izzard said. " 'You're a cunt' is fine." He expounded on his street technique of "positivizing" negative situations: "If someone says, 'You cunt bastard,' you say, 'Absolutely. I'm king of cunts. I am the absolute cunt of all time. I was trying to be a cunt bastard and you noticed it.' You embrace it and take it to you; and you repeat it over and over again until you sort of take it away from being a problem. You've made it part of your space."

As they waited to go on, Izzard stood with Palin, Jones, and Gilliam, watching a television monitor of a clip of Palin with Connie Booth, singing "The Lumberjack Song"—an old Python macho sendup, where the lumberjack wants to be a transvestite. "I've always thought I should do that song and spin it around," Izzard said. " 'I'm a transvestite but I want to be a lumberjack.' "



On the TV screen, Izzard's moment was well handled but brief. He managed to raise his quota of laughs and, in the process, to get pelted on the shoulder by Terry Gilliam with a well-thrown bread roll. But Izzard really hit funny that night in his own show, talking about the singer Engelbert Humperdinck. "How did he get his name? Were they all sitting in an office saying, 'Look, we're going to call you Bingelbert Hempledonk.' 'What about Binglebert Humperdonk?' 'I was thinking Geldebert Hingledunk.' 'Nah.' 'What about Hinglebert Enkledonk.' 'I've got a list—Geldebert Hingledunk. Hinglebert Enkledonk. Or Engelbert Humperdinck.' 'That's it!' "

In his dressing room later, Izzard mulled over the joke. "My instincts tell me that I need to play more on things around 'Engelbert.' I need to go 'Senglebert Bunderkink or Dinglebert Dingadonk. Engelbert Humperdinck. That's the one!' " he said. "I'm not quite sure I know. When it comes out of my mouth, I'll know, I'll feel it's right."

The next time I saw Izzard was on the small stage of the Westbeth Theatre, in New York. He was talking about Guy Fawkes and how he was "hung, drawn, and quartered." At the word "hung," Izzard tilted his neck and mimed a noose around it. At "drawn," he stepped back and pretended to sketch Fawkes.

"No, that's not it," a man shouted from the audience.

Izzard's eyes twinkled as he peered into the murky room. "Have you only just worked out that that's the first lie I've told you all night?" he said. "As it happens, there's a constant lying that goes on through the whole show." Instinctively, Izzard did a little of his "positivizing." He put his hands on his hips and rolled his eyes to the ceiling, imagining the man's bad review of the show. " 'The lies that were said in that room,' " he said. " 'I wanted to go out for a good night of realism.' " ♦

FICTION

RUNNER

A dangerous night in North Jersey—what's a girl to do?

BY RICHARD PRICE

At ten past ten in the evening, the stains that dappled the cement steps of the tenement stoop were still vivid, uncongealed, and Jesse Haus's first thought was that her timing was off, that she had made the scene too early. On the other hand, although a Dempsy County police cruiser was still slant-parked in front of the building, the crowds were gone and the bright plastic crime-scene tape already lay in a discarded tangle atop a balding shrub.

She had heard about this shooting over an hour ago, but if she had shown up as soon as the call came over, the cops would have been too cranked to talk, too shut down; the neighbors would be either in the dark or, if they knew anything, talking to the cops themselves; and she would have had to play human bumper pool with the handful of other North Jersey reporters who probably overheard the same radio squawk she did. Besides, there was no rush. It was long after the six-o'clock deadline, so, short of a mass suicide or an assassination, everything was for tomorrow night's edition anyhow.

Jesse was the type of reporter known by some as a runner, a stick-and-move artist living off the police scanner, hitting the scene, getting the names, a few quotes, a little local color, dumping all of it into a cell phone and then asking what else was going down out there—perpetually asking what else. She could have as many as two or three bylines a day, but the price she paid for that ubiquitousness was that the pieces would rarely read deeper than a snapshot.

She began climbing the steep, narrow tenement stairs to the third-floor crime scene. The high, funky, crumble-textured hallways of the tenement had last been painted a glossy maroon and mustard, and the claustrophobic colors, combined with a dense waft of cauliflower, made the hike to her story an oppressive experience.

A young cop stood spread-legged before the open apartment door. As she rose to the landing, Jesse could see behind him, triangularly framed by his ankles and legs, an overturned dinette chair and a large spatter of creamed corn on a rug.

"Hey, how you doing?"

She made herself sound exhausted.

"I'm sorry, you can't go in." The cop sounded polite, bored.

"But I was sent here," she said vaguely, huffing now, going for the Oscar.

"I'm sorry." He crossed his arms like a genie.

Then Jesse saw another cop, inside the apartment.

"Willy!" she called out, the uniform at the door now null and void.

"Hey Jess, what's up."

Willy Hernandez came out smiling, having grown up with Jesse in the Powell Houses—her family one of the last of the Jews and Hernandez's one of the first of the Puerto Ricans.

"What happened here?" Jesse asked, sounding personally dismayed.

Hernandez shrugged. "Guy comes in, pop pop, the old lady, the kid, then into the night."

"They're gonna make it?"

"I think so." Hernandez shrugged. "I hope so."

"You know the actor?"

"We're looking."

"Who is he?"

"So how's your folks doing?" he said, stonewalling her. "They still in the projects?"

The Hernandez family was long gone from Powell, the Haus family, her parents, still hanging in, her commie father regarding moving as an act of racist capitulation. Oftentimes Jesse wished that someone would just come along and do them in; get it over with.

"Comrade Haus!" Hernandez announced, saluting her father by his nickname. "Your pops was down."

"Yup," Jesse said quickly. "Can I come in?"

"I can't, Jess, you know that."

"Willy, I'm batting zero all day. C'mon, do it for the Comrade." She forced herself to smile. "C'mon, I'm not going to touch anything."

Hernandez sucked his teeth, about to relent, when a photographer from another in-county paper, an overweight wheezer trudging up the stairs, joined them at the door. "Can I get some pictures, boss?"

"No, no." Hernandez waved him off, then looked at Jesse with regret. This guy had tipped the scales; no one coming inside now.

Loitering in the shadows of the third-floor hallway until she was sure the fat bastard had left the building, Jesse walked down one flight and hit the apartment directly below the crime scene.

Responding to Jesse's crisp raps, a fiftyish black woman, wearing a quilted housecoat and a short coppery wig, came to the door, the humid aroma of stewed meat escaping out into the hall from behind her. Taking one look at Jesse through eyeglasses the diameter of drink coasters, the woman said, "No, I don't talk," and attempted to close the door. Before she could retreat, Jesse blurted, "But they said I should talk to you," and gestured to the floor above, to the cops.

"No." The woman shook her head, her hands entwined in a dish towel. "I don't do that."

"Did you know the child?"

"No, I don't know nothing."

"Your kids didn't play with him?"

"My kids?" The woman smiled, touched her fingers to her chest. "My kids is *grown*. That's a child . . . "

"How old?"

"I don't know." She started to close the door again.

“How do you have grown kids?” Jesse slid her foot a few inches over the threshold. “You look too young,” she said, wincing at her own hokiness.

“No, they grown now.”

“That lady up there was a friend?”

“No, she was old.”

“So the child was a grandchild?”

“I don't know, I keep to my own business.”

“You see anything?”

“No. I don't do that.”

“No?”

“I just heard . . . ”

“What you hear?”

The phone rang from inside the apartment.

“Excuse me.” She attempted to close her door yet again, but Jesse's foot was over the line. The woman gave her a long, pointed look, and Jesse had to withdraw.

“I'll wait for you here,” Jesse announced, knowing that the woman wouldn't come back. She gave her two minutes, knocked again, knocked louder, then tramped down the stairs.

At Jesse's feet now, a portly young black man sat on the bloody stoop, gazing out at the quiet street and smoking a blunt.

“You know what happened up there?” Jesse asked mildly.

He reared back, half turning to see her. “Nope.”

“Two people were shot.”

“Yeah, well, I knew that.”

“You know them?”

“Naw, well, yeah.” He offered her the fat joint, but she waved it off.

“That ole lady and the chil' . . . ” The man on the stoop shook his head. “Fuckin' asshole.”

“Who.”

“The, you know.”

“The shooter?”

He responded to the question with a languid cluck of the tongue, the sound carrying both reproach and disgust. “I *knew* that was gonna happen.”

“What's his name.” Jesse took the joint, took a tiny hit, exhaled before it could work on her.

“Damn. I come by, that old lady, she be out here, sit right here on this step, blood all over her ches', just sittin' here. I come over, she say ‘Get the baby, the baby's shot, too, get the baby.’ Then she like, falls over, so I go upstairs.” He made that clucking noise again. “Baby's all laying there on the floor, *blood* all over.”

“Crying?”

“Hell, yeah, so I go call, the amalance come, cops come.”

“. . . the killers, the killed, the bereaved, the stunned, the liars, the fuckers, the heroes, the clownish, and the helpless; Jesse needing these people to come inside her, to give her life . . .” The author, above.

ANDREA VENTURA

“Who did it.”

“The boyfriend, who you think?”

“Of . . . ”

“The, you know, Chantal.”

“Chantal . . . ”

“The mother.”

“The baby's mother?”

“Man, she wasn't even home, so he goes and . . . ” He clucked and waved again.

“Goes and shoots the grandma and the baby?”

This time he made a noise like escaping steam.

“What's his name?” Jesse writing all this down using her thigh as a desk, writing without looking. “What's his name?”

He hesitated, took a long toke, slowly twisted around again. “How you know it wasn't me?”

“Was it you?” Jesse wishing it was; that would be fucking aces. “Was it you?”

He turned around again.

“Tiger.”

“It was Tiger?”

He didn't answer.

“Tiger what . . . ”

“Just Tiger.”

“They know that?”

“They lookin' for him now.”

“Tiger Chantal's boyfriend?”

“Was.”

“Tiger the baby's father?” Jesse playing dentist.

“Could be.”

“Tiger the old lady's son?”

“Alls I know is Tiger.”

“How come Tiger did it?”

“She kicked 'im to the curb.”

“Chantal did?”

“Yup.”

“The cops know this?”

“The ones talked to me does. But you could ask anybody on this street. Tiger's a *ass*hole. I just hope Miss Delano pull through, the baby, too.”

“Where's Tiger live?”

“Used to live upstairs . . . *Damn*, I can't believe that shit. I jus' come back from giving my father a driving lesson with the car, Miss Delano sittin' out here, *bleed*in', God knows how long she sittin' there . . . *rock*in'.”

“You just come back from giving your father a driving lesson?” Jesse was slowed down by that, touched, thinking maybe she liked people after all.

After trudging back up the stairs, Jesse found the door of the crime scene closed. She had to ring the bell for a full half minute before the cop she didn't know would open up.

“Hey there.” She smiled, her fatigue now only half-faked.

“You can't come in. I told you that.”

“Who's Tiger?” She asked like he owed it to her.

“What?”

“I hear Tiger did it.”

“A tiger did it?” Fucking with

her. “Hey, I'm just safeguarding the scene.”

“You didn't hear anybody talk about Tiger?”

The cop just stared.

“JOSE.” Jesse, cell phone to her jaw, glared at her own scrawl.

“Yo.”

“I got two shot.”

“O.K.”

“Infant.”

“O.K. . . . Where.”

“In the chest.”

“No, *where*.”

“440 Firpo.”

“O.K.”

“And I got a grandmother.”

“O.K.”

“D-E-L-A-N-O . . . Esther.”

“O.K.”

“Baby's Damien, *Foy*. F-O-Y.”

“Damien?”

“Yeah, like ‘The Omen.’ ”

“O.K. Age?”

“I'll get that. Shooter's maybe the father.”

“There you go.”

“But it looks like they're gonna both pull through.”

“Huh. O.K.”

“The grandmother comes out, shot.”

“O.K.”

“Just sat on the stoop, like in shock, I guess.”

“O.K.”

“Neighbor comes by . . . ”

“O.K. . . . ”

“Aaron P-A-R-M-A-L-E-E.”

“O.K.” Jose's responses soothing and rhythmic as he simultaneously took down her words and edited them on the fly, the two of them getting into a familiar call-and-response rhythm that they had unconsciously cultivated over the years.

“Parmalee comes by . . . lady says, quote, ‘The baby's upstairs, get the baby,’ end quote.” Jesse thinking, More or less.

“O.K.”

“Goes upstairs, sees the baby on the floor, bleeding.”

“O.K.”

“Parmalee calls the *am*alance,” Jesse said, putting the guy's spin on it.

“O.K.”

“Aaron says to me, quote, ‘I knew that was gonna happen,’ end quote.”

“Good.”

“Says the actor's a guy named Tiger.”

“Last name?”

“Yeah, right. Parmalee says Tiger done got kicked to the curb by the baby's mother, Chantal. I don't have a last name yet.”

“O.K.”

“Police say, ‘Tiger? Who's Tiger?’ ”

“O.K.”

“But she kicked him out.”

“Neighbors say?”

“Neighbors say.”

“O.K.”

“Neighbors say . . . they had been known to quarrel.”

“O.K. Police won't confirm?”

“Not . . . I have an ongoing dialogue with the detective here, but no, not yet.”

“So the kid's gonna make it?”

“Well, he was crying, right? So I guess so.”

“Grandma, too?”

“Don't know yet. So what else is going on?”

“44 Forest, a shooting. Sounds like one friend shooting the other. Here we go. Fifteen-year-old male, thirteen-year-old male. Fifteen shooting thirteen and . . . It's a graze wound. Fuck it.”

“Maybe it's a brother act.”

“They're under sixteen. We couldn't use the names anyhow.”

“What else . . . ”

“We got a possible carjack. Female being treated at the Medical Center.”

“What else?”

“Hold on . . . 125 Division Street. Over in Tunnely. Got a body.”

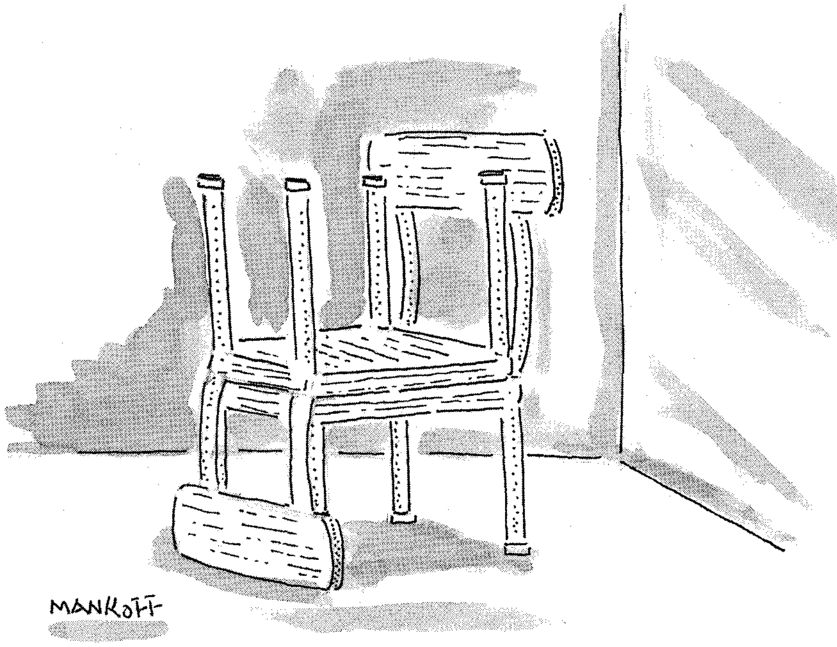
THE body was a stinking, gas-filled balloon yielding neither sex nor race, the skin marbled, stretched taut, the color of smoke. There was no trouble getting past the door on this one, since the two uniforms charged with safeguarding the scene were almost grateful for company, and Jesse had known one of them from back in the day.

The cops, Jerry Bohannon and Tony, she thought, Siragusa, had lit some incense they found on a desktop next to the burnt spoon—maybe a dozen sticks jammed into the doorframe and around the bed—but it was a basement apartment, the sole window half below street level, and the scented smoke only added a sweetish element to the over-all stench.

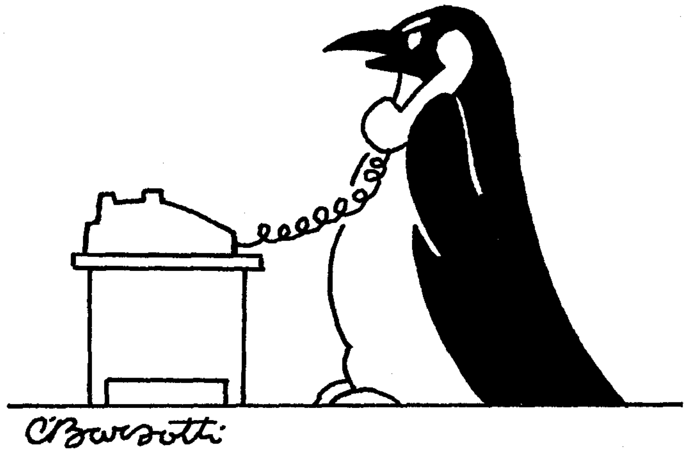
“Live by the spike, die by the spike,” announced Jerry Bohannon, a milk-white Irishman with an almost transparent mustache. He was gesturing to the needle still stuck in the left forearm.

“No I.D.?” Jesse asked, exhaling through her mouth to avoid the smell. “Jesus . . . ”

“The old lady upstairs, I guess she owns the house. She's not home, but the shoes tell me it's a him.”



HOW CHAIRS HAVE SEX



"And I'm telling you you've got the wrong pole."

"As does the 'stache," Siragusa added, holding his nose as he leaned over the body. "Hair's kind of straight, so I'd say white, Hispanic."

"I don't want to start going through his shit," Bohannon said. "Wait for Crime Scenes . . . "

Jesse looked around the bedroom, fairly neat for an overdose—some old pop-culture stuff lying around, airplane models, World's Fair buttons, a Howdy Doody doll hanging from a noose, some *Mad* magazines from the sixties; the body something of a nostalgia buff. She wandered into the bathroom: a mildewed shower curtain, a stack of fuck books on one side of the toilet and a kitty-litter tray, soiled, on the other. Quickly, quietly, she opened the medicine chest, trying to find a name on a prescription bottle. A vial of Fiurinal gave up Michael Jackson; Jesse thinking, Good one.

There was another room, an eat-in kitchenette with nicer shelves and surfaces than her own. She distractedly grunted, wheels turning. One of the perks for a runner was getting to know, before anyone else, that an apartment was about to go on the market.

"You see a cat around here?" Jesse asked, reëntering the bedroom. The cops were sharing a cigar now, to further mask the smell; Bohannon using his cupped palm as an ashtray.

"A cat?" Siragusa said.

"What do you think he pays here?" Jesse asked.

"Rent?" Bohannon made a face. "Three, four hundred?"

"I'd say four, five," Siragusa said.

"Yeah, huh?" Jesse looked around again.

"Jess . . . " Bohannon offered her the cigar, which she declined. "If you're thinking about making a move on this, you should go for it, like, *now*, 'cause I'll bet with this smell in here? They'll let it go for a song."

"I ain't afraid a no ghosts," Siragusa said, vamping Ray Parker.

"It's the live ones that's the problem." Bohannon puffed away.

"I need a name," Jesse said to him. "Can I look in the drawers and stuff?"

"I kind of wish you wouldn't. They're bitching about sloppy preservation."

"Whatever." Jesse shrugged.

Siragusa poked the Howdy Doody doll, making it sway in its noose.

"Michael Jackson!" Jesse almost shouted, making both cops jump. Suddenly the name had rung a bell beyond the obvious. "I *know* this . . . aw Jesus." She flapped her arms. "I *know* him, I went to school with . . . Aw Jesus. You know who this is?" she asked Bohannon, who, like Willy Hernandez, she had grown up with, gone to high school with. "You remember Mrs. Jackson? The English teacher? Remember she had a son? Michael Jackson?"

"Wait . . . " Bohannon's face was working.

"You *got* to remember. He was in special ed. Everybody used to make fun of him because of his name."

Bohannon looked at her blankly.

"C'mon, Jerry—Michael Jackson, Mrs. Jackson."

"I remember *Mrs.* Jackson," he said cautiously.

"Don't you remember that time she had that big fight with Markowitz in the hallway, screaming about how the school was treating her son, saying he didn't belong in special ed . . . "

Jesse saw the memory hit Jerry Bohannon, pushing him back two steps like a buffet of wind.

"No . . . " he hissed. "This is . . . She still around, Mrs. Jackson?" He winced as if hoping she was dead.

"I think she's retired," Jesse said, feeling the same way, and hoping that if she *was* still around Bohannon here wouldn't be making the notifications. The idea that one of Mrs. Jackson's former mediocre students would be knocking on her door, delivering the bad news, was an intolerable notion.

"Aw, man," Bohannon said heavily, then looked at his partner for a long moment. Siragusa, having grown up elsewhere, wasn't in on the Jackson family's tribulations. He returned Bohannon's pointed look with what to Jesse seemed like an artificial blankness. But Bohannon wasn't having it, continuing to stare down his partner until Siragusa nodded, a gesture of surrender, Jesse feeling like she was witnessing a telepathic conversation.

Bohannon took a handkerchief from his rear pocket and used it to carefully pull out one of the desk drawers. Then both he and Siragusa emptied their front pockets into the open drawer, tossing back two rubberband-bound stacks of furry-edged baseball cards, a nickel-plated Zippo lighter, a fat swirl-textured fountain pen, and a Swiss Army knife.

A great crash from the kitchen had both cops spinning around—Bohannon with his gun out front, Siragusa sliding to the wall, his Glock held down along his leg, Jesse starving, begging for it, Make my night here.

The cat walked in, took a look, and ran out again. All three of them exhaled, Siragusa inching forward to check the kitchen, his gun still drawn, Bohannon mumbling, "Just shut the goddam drawer."

Jesse's cell phone rang, Jose coming on. "Jess, you remember that carjacking?" His voice carried a certain restrained edginess that she hadn't heard in weeks—a good sign.

"Carjack?" Then, going bandido on

him, "I don't need no stinking carjack."

"*Hey*," Jose snapped. "Don't fuck with me on this."

Jose losing his cool—Jesse thinking, A great sign.

THE Armstrong Houses were built on the side of a hill, buildings One and Two at the crest, Three, Four, and Five at the base, a vast oval of dirt and grass centering the site.

The car had been jacked in front of a pocket-park at the end of a rubbled cul-de-sac beneath the low-end buildings. The victim was white, female, thirty years of age. The bad guy was black, bald, tall, and had taken off in this stolen ride unaware that there was a four-year-old boy asleep in the back seat. Or so went the story. Despite a police blockade of all four entrances to the project, Jesse picked out at least four other reporters sneaking around, including one slipping in as she watched—a lanky skinhead from across the river whom she had seen at other stories. The guy glommed on to an unsuspecting police captain as he came through the blockade, keeping pace with him but walking backward, miming a conversation for the benefit of the border patrol until he was inside the club. As for herself, Jesse had simply walked in—no notebook, no cell phone, wearing a hooded sweatshirt and putting on her no-face face. She strolled in like she lived there, which was almost true, the Powell Houses being just five blocks away.

Word was that the cops were bringing back the mother for a scene-of-the-crime walk-through, and Jesse stood in the breezeway closest to the park—that of Three Building—and surveyed the players, hoping to spot the victim, shadow her and maybe catch a few words.

The scene before her was a real backyard do—cops, restless tenants, the beginnings of a roaming media presence, all caught in the crossfire of pothole bucking headlights, the effect somewhere between a discothèque and a nighttime artillery barrage. Overhead, a Conrail train powered past, the racket and rush turning the heads of all who were there but the tenants. When Jesse turned back to the park, a detective was holding high the neon-orange tape and there she was, the mother; pale, thin, lank-haired, eyes a dazzling lupine gray, and Jesse felt a blood-driven rush like dropping out of a tree.

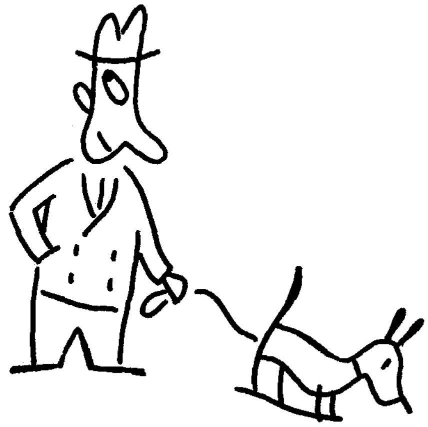
JESSE thought of all reporters, but especially street reporters, as junkies. And although there was a universal undercurrent of adrenaline running through each of them, the true drug of choice varied from writer to writer.

For some, it was a compulsive craving for the truth, to know what the hell happened, what really fucking happened here; who said what to whom and what was said in return; how did this blood truly get here on this stoop, on this bed—information most often serving no higher purpose than to relay the specifics with reasonable accuracy to the public, and, more personally, to scratch that unappeasable itch.

There were those who got off on being around cops, around violence, around death, those who enjoyed living dangerously and getting paid for it.

And then there were those, and in this group Jesse would most definitely include herself, who were addicted to something she thought of as the Infilling; the compulsive hankering to witness, to absorb, to taste human behavior in extremis; to embrace, to be filled, no matter how fleetingly, with the power of human grief, human rage, to do it over and over, to feel herself absorbing the madness of others, the commitment of others; the killers, the killed, the bereaved, the stunned, the liars, the fuckers, the heroes, the clownish, and the helpless; Jesse needing these people to come inside her, to give her life, *a* life; and she loved them for it.

Like any other halfway decent professional she had been called all the names—vampire, ghoul, bloodsucker, parasite—but it never really bothered her because she knew her love was ardent and true.



TWENTY yards away from the cordoned-off crime scene, Jesse watched the detective and the victim with the craving eyes of a social climber—the tape a velvet rope, the crime scene a V.I.P. room, the posted uniforms nothing more than armed bouncers.

The nearest tape stretched from a garbage can, positioned flush to a Conrail retaining wall, straight across to one of the concrete columns in the breezeway of Three Building, next to her.

There was no way for her to slip in. Jesse, anxious, squinted through the trees to see if the back entrance to the park was guarded too. It had to be, but she couldn't swear to it, couldn't make out any uniforms from where she was standing. So maybe, just maybe, if she cut out of the project altogether, walked around to the far side of everything, she might be able to slip in through the back door. If she couldn't, she'd be screwed altogether, because she doubted she could reënter like she had the first time, but, but, but—pacing in the rubble, clammy with desire, with indecision.

"Hey," someone said, male, low-key.

Jesse turned to see a young cop, Fu Manchu, Hawaiian shirt, high-top sneakers—an urban action figure strolling toward her from out of the shadows, something almost contemplative in his deliberate gait, steady-eyed, tilting his head in a beckoning gesture—Jesse thinking, Busted.

"You're a reporter, right?" He stood before her, his hands jammed in his rear pockets.

"Yeah. But . . ."

"Local, right? The *Register*?"

Jesse tried to get a read on him as he rubbed the exhaustion from under his eyes, both hands sweeping out along his cheekbones, the gesture slightly theatrical.

"It's like the Invasion of the Body Snatchers," he said, waving a limp hand to take in the world. "You got half the job here, the New York press. It's like Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey."

Jesse found herself easing into an alert openness—this guy not about evicting her, but wanting something.

"I wish they'd put a fucking plug in the Holland Tunnel, you know what I mean?"

"I hear you," Jesse said, eyes darting to catch a glimpse of the mother in the tree-shadow behind the tape. "So you're local?" she asked lightly, as if they were at a bar.

"Same as you." He smiled at her, his eyes a cracked blue, Jesse thinking, He's hitting on me; scrambling for how to play this.

"You trying to get a peek?" He nodded toward the scene.

"Shit, yeah," she said, giving him a big smile.

"Well, let's face it, you can't, right?"

"You sure?" Jesse going all coy, able to dry hump, if need be, with the best of them. The headlights of a cruiser abruptly bleached them blind, then cut out, leaving both of them blinking away dots in the renewed darkness.

"It's nothing but a mud bowl anyhow." He shrugged. "It's . . . there's nothing to see, really. Just mud and bullshit."

"O.K." Jesse returned the shrug, hoping this guy felt he had to show her something, impress her. "Got any suggestions?"

"Suggestions?" He stared at her pensively. "You're Jesse Haus, right?"

"Yes, I am." Jesse stepped back, fighting off a hit of paranoia.

"I'm Mark Goldberg." He extended his hand, his grip firm and slightly lingering, as she had expected.

"So . . . " she said, almost demandingly.

He cocked his head as if knowing he had to produce here. "Come on."

He held out his arm to drape it around her shoulders, but then started walking toward Three Building without touching her. Jesse followed at first, then walked abreast of him.

"They got me coming off a double tour. I'm so tired I couldn't bust a balloon."

"I hear you."

As they cut through Three's breezeway, coming to the low-end rim of Armstrong's vast dust-bowl oval, Goldberg stepped aside for Jesse to go before him, like they were walking through a door.

"Hey Jesse?" He said her name with cautious delicacy. "I have to tell you, you wrote something about six months ago that I thought was very powerful."

"Oh yeah?" Jesse started liking him a little, liking his courtly tentativeness, but cops were so fucking nuts as a rule.

"You wrote about Efran Ortega's family, you know, after the funeral? *Very* powerful."

"Really." Jesse wary of the compliment now, Ortega having been a grossly overweight drug dealer who died, possibly of a cocaine-abetted heart attack, while being arrested. One of the cops who had cuffed him was initially brought up on charges of using excessive force, then later cleared, the entire Latino community taking to the streets for a week after the failure of the grand jury to indict.

Jesse hadn't really written the piece per se—just dumped the images and the gestures, the grief-stricken words and faces into the phone to Jose. As usual, Jesse had been more hidden camera than writer.

"Honestly," Goldberg said. "You really gave the guy a human face."

"Thank you." Jesse huffing a little from the climb, distracted, wondering where they were headed, gazed back down at the block party, the scene reduced to shadowed movement and spears of light. She smelled the overpowering essence of fast-food fried chicken, and looked down to see two young women sharing a bucket of takeout, the woman nearest her using a patch of dead grass as a hand towel.

"Hang on, my back is . . ." Goldberg lightly rested his fingers on her arm, and it felt good, his touch. Jesse jolted, abruptly reacquainted with the unnerving surge that could go through you coming off simple skin-to-skin contact.

"Anyways, Ortega . . . The guy's born a baby just like everybody else. Born into a family, born into a situation, hits the crossroads of life, he takes the path that his life, to date, has taught him. Correct?"

"Where we headed?" Jesse asked mildly, watching some little kids, liberated from bed by the carjacking, taking diving rolls down the slope of the oval, coming up giddy and wild-eyed.

"I mean, whatever Ortega did in life, given the hand that was dealt him, he left behind people who honestly grieved for him—*that* you made very clear."

"O.K." Jesse was restless now, and vaguely alarmed that the emotional charge she had just experienced was already beginning to fade.

They were almost to the crest of the hill, headed toward the high-end buildings, and now Jesse could see the whole scene below. A satellite truck was driving alongside the Conrail tracks, its antenna spire like an upthrust sword slicing the sky. Jesse suddenly panicked. She turned

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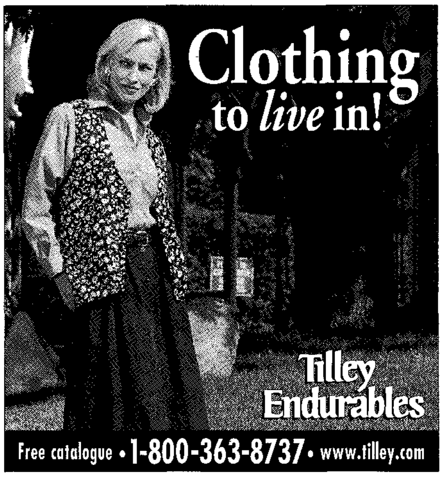

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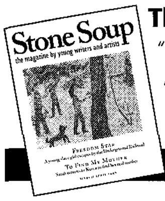

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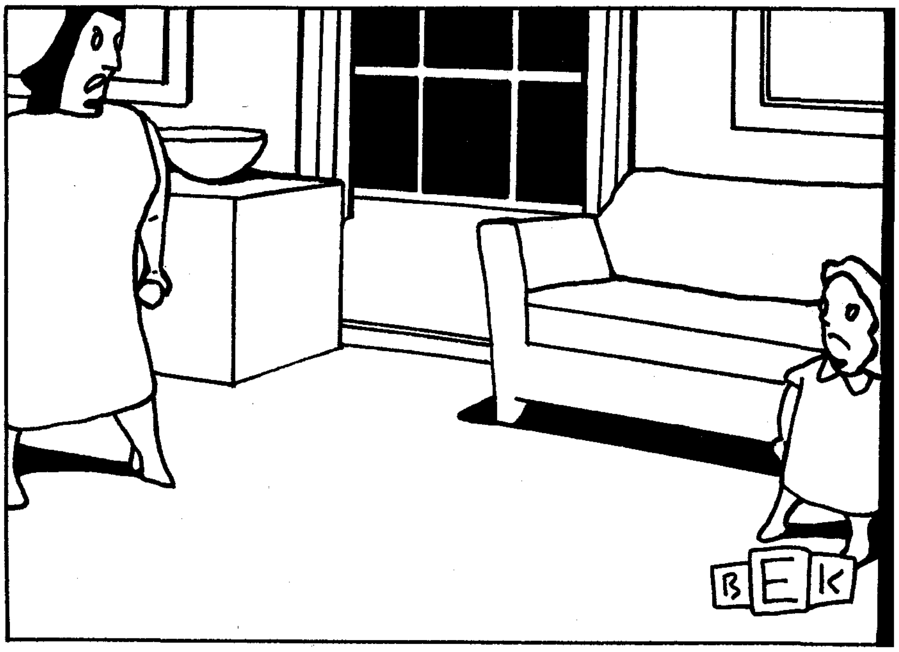


"Someday, you'll act like you understand."

to Goldberg, wondering if she could just tell him to fish or cut bait, demand to see what he had to swap, right here, right now, the news truck making it hard for her to play games, stay flirty.

"C'mon." He winked at her, Jesse thinking, Who *winks* anymore. But he looked as if he were reading her mind, extending his hand to her in a promising manner, and so she continued to follow him up toward the One Building–Two Building end of the houses.

"You know, the only thing I wish... The cop? The one they tried to indict for using that choke hold?"

"Incavaglia?"

"Yeah, Jimmy Incavaglia. You know he was never formally charged. I mean, he was charged in the media, but departmental, Internal Affairs, grand jury, totally cleared him. Except you read the paper, what did you read. You read, use of illegal choke hold. You read, six previous civilian complaints for excessive use of force."

Jesse nodding, thinking, Six.

"And like, if you continue to read, you know, like continue on page thirteen, you find out none of those complaints were substantiated. You read Ortega weighed two hundred and forty pounds, had cocaine in his system and chronic asthma, a *heart* condition, had, what I say? *Three* violent priors. But you turned on the TV, opened the paper, it was Incavaglia, choke hold. Choke hold, Incavaglia, had his academy photo up there like a mug shot."

"But he was cleared, right?" Jesse said as he steered her in the direction of One Building. "I mean, you take the information as it comes in."

"No no no, please." Goldberg held out his hand as if to fend her off. "Me, you, we're barely cogs in the machine, right?"

"Right." Jesse saw another news truck roll in along the train tracks. "Where we going, Mark?"

"No. Alls I'm saying is, and this is why I'm kind of glad to finally *meet* you, is, you did such a bang-up job on the, Ortega's family, you know, the aftermath, that, just for balance, it would have been very, what's the... informative, to do a piece, just like that, no more no less, on Incavaglia's family, what that incident did to them. You ever follow up on the Incavaglia end of things? I don't mean the—I mean, domestic."

"I would have liked to," Jesse said warily, something definitely not right here.

"No? O.K. It's too late anyhow, but just for the hell of it, let me fill you in."

"O.K.," Jesse said, eying the tracks.

"Anyways, Jimmy Incavaglia, up to the Ortega arrest, was five years A.A. O.K.? Two days after the, the tragedy, you know—with the publicity, the demonstrations, the death threats—he's hitting the oil like making up for lost time, O.K.? And, like, today? He's basically a drunk. They got him on bullshit detail, you know, vouchering evidence, shit like that. And, by the way, he's thirty-two years old, so we're not talking about some old geezer hanging on to the job with gin blossoms all over his nose... Thirty-*two*. So there's *that*."

Having completed their hike, they entered the breezeway of One Building, deserted now, save for some cops running warrants. Jesse was desperate to blow.

"O.K. His wife, Jeanette, she, they always had a rocky thing, I won't bullshit you, but now they're no more, they're not together. She couldn't take it. Jimmy and Jeanette, they're like me and you, born and bred, still living here, so the whole family thing, they had no insulation. I mean, maybe if they lived down the shore like half the job does, you know, Toms River or somewheres, but the newspaper hits the street? They're right here, twenty-four seven."

Jesse took a business card out of her jeans. "Do you want to talk about this tomorrow or something?"

"Come on." He took the card and kept walking her along. "Just let me finish. So Jeanette, here's what else. She taught sixth grade at Thirty-one School, you know Thirty-one School? Rough, right?"

"Right."

"Anyways, half the kids Dominican, Puerto Rican, other half black. Now, these kids, they watch the TV, their parents read the paper. It's Mrs. Incavaglia's husband who did this. And they come into class, you know, staring at her, so, she had to transfer out, which is a shame, because she liked it there and she was good. They needed her, plus, on top of that, you know, she's coming home to a drunk, going to sleep with a drunk, waking up with a drunk. And the kid, their kid... That's the worst of all. Eight, nine, goes to, *went* to Forty-four School, coming home every day bloody. The poor kid's fighting off half the fourth grade, and Jimmy, what's he gonna do, go down to the schoolyard and straighten things out? He's a spic-killer, right? It's in the paper, he can't. So they take the kid out, put him in St. Mary's over in the Heights. Same shit, same shit... The kid looked like a punching bag. So now he goes to some Catholic school in Bergen County, spends two hours a day on a bus, his dad's not living at home anymore, his mom's all bent out of shape. And that's *their* follow-up profile. Scattered to the winds, each and every one of them."

They were approaching the high-end blockade, another slant-parked cruiser.

"I'm sorry to hear all this." Jesse was still on full alert, but meaning it, especially about the kid, her own childhood marked by ostracism, too.

"Well, it's nice of you to say." Goldberg came to a halt and, wincing, arched his back again. "You know, in all honesty, even before all this shit, Jimmy was, you know, at best a so-so cop. But given all the heartache that came out of this for him and his family? All the, the bullshit, it would have been more bearable, or more *some*thing, if he had only been indicted, or if Internal Affairs had actually *found* something, but . . . It was the media. Well, shit." He took a seat on the hood of the cruiser. "You probably hear this crap all the time."

"Hey, Mark?"

"Yeah."

"Where we going?"

"Where?" he shrugged. "We're here."

He turned to the uniform posted by the car. "This is a closed crime scene, correct?"

The uniform stared at him for a beat, then nodded.

"You see this here?" He indicated Jesse as if she were inanimate. "This is a fucking reporter. So do your Goddamned job and kick her ass out."

He turned and left her there, just walked off, massaging his lower back, while Jesse, white with rage, momentarily shook off the tentative, herding touch of the young uniform and barked blood.

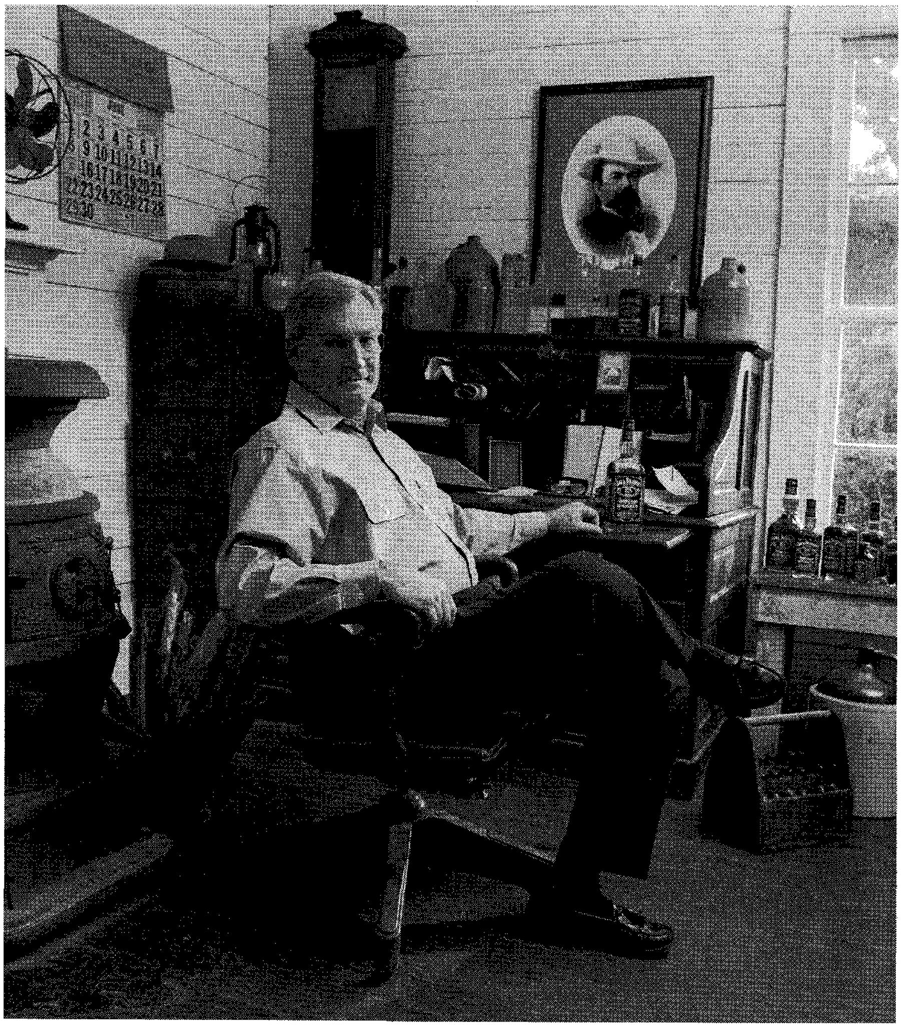
"*Six* civilian complaints? How many others didn't even bother to *file*."

Without turning around, Mark flipped her a fadeaway bird, then tossed her business card in the brown, patchy scrub that, in the Armstrong Houses, was known as grass.

RACING back down the hill on streets parallel to the projects, Jesse pulled up her hood again and approached the low-end blockade, this one guarded by a uniform leaning against a cruiser and seemingly engrossed in eating sunflower seeds.

"Don't even *think* it . . ." he said, never raising his eyes from the bag in his hand.

Stepping back, Jesse recalled the mother's eyes as the detective had held up the tape; shock-stark, arctic with disbelief, those eyes denied to her now, their jolt of sensation, of personal history, Jesse spinning like a top, burning with love. ♦



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A CRITIC AT LARGE

THE MOVIEGOERS

Why don't people love the right movies anymore?

BY DAVID DENBY

It's very possible that the terrific crime thriller "L.A. Confidential"—the recipient of two Oscars as well as many critics' awards (I have no hesitation in shilling for it as the best movie of last year)—will someday earn a profit. It hasn't yet; it has struggled in the theatres. But "L.A. Confidential" should do well (so I am told) in the Elysian fields of cable and video, where marketing costs drop almost to nothing and a movie sometimes just earns and earns. Even if that happens, however, the movie's difficulty in finding a large theatre audience will remain a matter of some chagrin to me and a number of other movie critics I've spoken to. What remains of vanity has dropped another notch, for here was the latest and most obvious sign of our sorry lack of sway. Clearly, the audience was not listening—not to us, at any rate. And in my case the commercial problems of a good movie stimulated many other disagreeable and rebellious thoughts about the movie scene in general and criticism's place in it.

"Movie criticism has become a cultural malady, a group case of chronic depression," James Wolcott wrote last April in *Vanity Fair.* Critics, of course, are only a minor part of the action, so why should anyone care whether they are demoralized or not? Wolcott himself thought that critics were becoming whiners, and a friend has said to me that "movie critics are like spotted owls," by which he means that the fate of so specialized a creature will never stir a general outcry. True enough, but please notice the flaws in my friend's remark. If a species is threatened, it may be a sign that something is degraded in the environment—something that will affect the rest of us sooner or later. Anyway, critics and moviegoers live together in the same forest, not in separate habitats.

Perhaps we can agree that everyone living in that forest, that magical Arden, is engaged in a lifetime romance, a passion without end—the love of movies. This may seem a lofty way of describing a tired citizen's slinking off to "Con Air" after a long day at the office. Yet the longing to escape from routine is also a form of passion, and passion of any sort is always an absorption in the erotics of shape, texture, and contour. As moviegoers, we care for this movie or that movie, this performance or that one: the ripe "L.A. Confidential" and the austere "Sweet Hereafter"; Julianne Moore's red-lipped, Expressionist anguish in "Boogie Nights"; and Matt Damon's pale, tough-vulnerable mug in "Good Will Hunting."

But who among us could now love "the movies" as they confront the public in the media—the movies as a system of publicity and commerce? Every week, as new commercial movies open, vast armies of promotion storm the beach—an invasion leading, often, to a sudden withdrawal—and all this happens again the following week, with another set of movies, a new beachhead, and, often, another collapse, the rapid cycle itself producing its share of cynicism and disgust. The audience is buffeted by the anxiety of a system that can never sell hard enough or fast enough; it is trapped in Hollywood's seeming contempt for its own products.

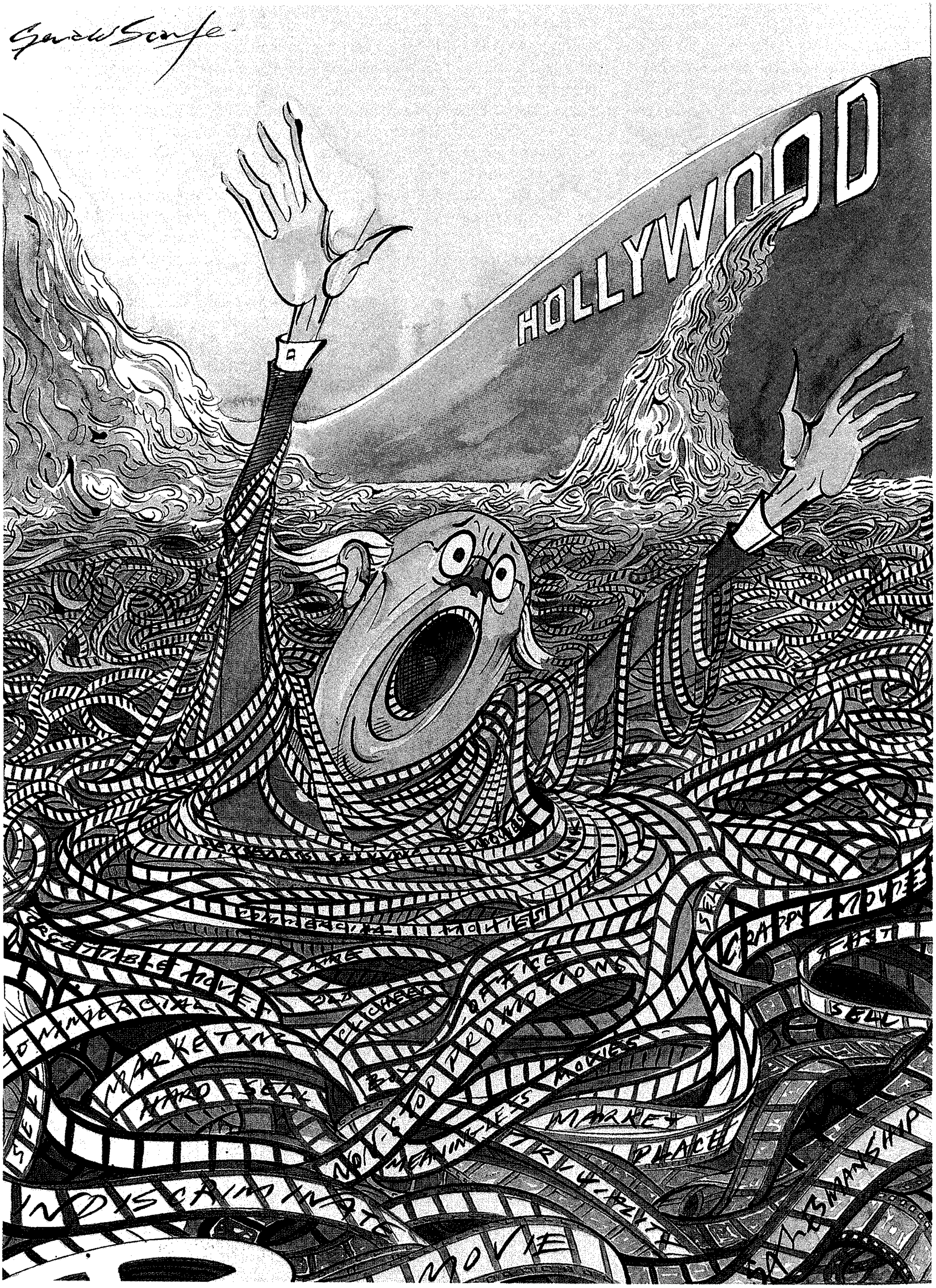
If a new movie doesn't catch on in the opening weekend, studio executives may immediately cut off the expensive TV ads for it and then restrict the film's distribution; and theatre-chain owners, who make a good part of their money from the concession stands, and who consequently long to get hungry bodies into the multiplexes, quickly dump a weak performer and move a strong one onto three, or four, or as many as six screens in a single complex. A movie that cannot sell popcorn and Coke at high prices disappears from the 'plexes in a few weeks—often too fast for word of mouth to rally on its behalf. Given more time, the audience might have "saved" the picture, but it's gone.

None of this is new. But in the past decade the selling of movies has grown both deafening and senseless. The promotional system rarely sells the particular qualities of a given movie—the tone, the temper, the body. It just sells, period. Warner Bros., tailoring its campaign for "L.A. Confidential" last fall to look like every other campaign for violent thrillers, could not convey to women that they might enjoy the movie. That campaign (it has recently been revised) was no more than another set of disposable images on television. Miramax alone among distributors understands that if promotion isn't as sharp as a knife, it may never penetrate the barrier of audience fatigue.

A medium that was once the movies' feared rival, television, now functions as a busy ad-pub division of Hollywood. Oprah, Barbara, and Kathie Lee—and, of course, MTV and E!—compete with one another for sell-the-picture "interviews" with the stars; and cable outlets run promotional "documentaries" about the making of a new film. As for print journalism, a good many editors, feature writers, and hack critics—these last handing out rave quotes like free candy on the streets—have simply been pressed into the marketing operation for movies. With what effect? Again and again I have sat before some meaningless Hollywood thriller or comedy convinced that the picture wasn't even made with an American theatre audience in mind. Such movies—in the past couple of months, "Hard Rain," "Desperate Measures," "Sphere"—may fail in the theatres, but the original push in the media establishes the picture's name for the ancillary markets (Blockbuster, HBO, Bangkok), and that may be what matters most to the people who made it. Twenty years ago, critics complained that marketing considerations were determining the content of movies. Now a subbranch of marketing—the clangorous media promotion system, including journalism—is helping to determine the content of movies. The dog is being wagged not by the tail but by the fleas on the tail.

It's the critic's job to straighten things

GERALD SCARFE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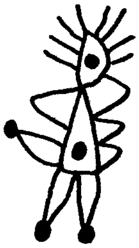
The flood of media promotion overwhelms the voice of a good critic, turning him into either a huckster or a crank.

out: he can seize, loverlike, on the particulars, the tone, the succulent difference between one movie and another—at least, when there is a difference. "Evoke, evoke!" a Henry James of movie criticism might cry out; any fool can have opinions. But the flood of media promotion overwhelms the voice of a good critic; and the commercialization of routine reviewing—in TV-preview shows and newspaper-ad blurb writing—turns criticism into mere opinion, another cheerfully meaningless bit of noise, the whooshing of thumbs, up and down. Yes, serious critics continue, with gravity or wit, to announce their opinions. But such people (including me) have been buried by a widespread perception of their naïveté. *They don't get it.* They don't understand that the marketing-and-promotion system is now less a means of bringing products to consumers than a law of existence, a metaphysics of momentum which either turns the critic into a huckster or reduces him to a crank.

"L.A. Confidential" was cast without stars, but it was precisely the unfamiliarity of two of the actors, Guy Pearce and Russell Crowe, as well as the originality of Kevin Spacey's performance, that made possible one of the movie's strongest effects—the sense that the police-detective heroes were changing and growing under the pressure of experience. So the movie's sluggish box-office performance might be explained by another possibility, one more unpleasant than the failure of an ad campaign: Was the movie too good to take off? Did the complex characterization, the layered plot, and the velvety, soaked-in-noir visual style make the movie too much work for an audience accustomed to simpler demands? If the answer to the above question is yes, or maybe, we are all in trouble. (After all, the picture, however brilliant, was conceived in commercial terms, not as an art film.) And critics are *really* in trouble. In good times a critic can ignore the marketplace, and even the struggles of a good movie, and do his job of expounding and analyzing; he can celebrate art and pleasure and applaud new talent; he can evaluate the traffic and sustain a conversation with moviegoers.

But such high-minded solace will hardly be possible if the culture in which criticism makes sense as an activity is beginning to fade. So, before dismissing the critical malaise as a parochial whine—mere screening-room blahs—consider certain aspects of the movies themselves. Consider whether the last fifteen years or so haven't witnessed dismaying shifts in sensibility and tone—a deadening of vital impulses that make good movies possible and criticism valuable.

AS I listen to people talk (well, let's say older people) I get the sense that many moviegoers who loved the French, Italian, Japanese, British, and Eastern European films of the sixties and the American films of the seventies (the early work of Coppola, Altman, Scorsese, Spielberg, De Palma, and many others) have simply stopped going to the movies, or go with limited hopes, with a sickened sense that the house is sliding down the hill and can never be pulled back to the top again. It's not just "art" (always rare) that older moviegoers miss. It's emotion. After all, some very sophisticated people have cared about movies in a primitive way. They have cared about characters and stories and gestures, and the strength of their involvement has produced a remarkable intensity and variety of moods—pangs of regret and despair; voluptuous enjoyment of lowlife pessimism and inadmissible snobberies; a winged exuberance; a flowing sense of well-being. The more knowing may have told themselves that the emotion-flooded products of Hollywood—Bette Davis as a blind woman on the stairs in "Dark Victory"—were kitsch; they may have felt themselves seduced, even gulled, by movies. But that realization hardly ended the power of enjoyment. In "L.A. Confidential," set in the early fifties, the swank Beverly Hills pimp played by David Strathairn provides his wealthy clients with whores made up as Lana Turner or Veronica Lake, and, in a way, that's what we've always wanted from movies: the erotic power of illusion. Movie love puts people in touch with their own instincts and pleasures. Movies can lead to self-reconciliation, and that is one reason they have inspired an almost unlimited affection.



Even to speak of movie emotion in such terms is now extremely awkward. In so many Hollywood movies nothing much is at stake—no particular meaning, no powerfully articulated temper, no arrogantly singular sense of style, no fully achieved narrative. Indeed, many big-studio movies are consciously fashioned so as to take involvement *out*—the entire range of emotions jettisoned in favor of one emotion, physical excitement. Why? It has apparently become a commonplace among Hollywood filmmakers that a given emotion, if done straight, will simply seem a dim and sentimental retread of some cherished moment from an old movie, so it's safer not to try for it. But isn't that fear a covert way of admitting that one has little conviction about whatever one is doing? Emotion grows out of belief in a subject, a character, a dramatic situation. In art, emotion always entails risk—the risk of imprecision—whereas spectacle is a matter of technique and production values.

The cinema, having replaced the public executions and bare-knuckle fights of earlier ages, is the modern arena of peril, sadism, and death. But most of the spectacular, violent new movies are amazingly impersonal—a rush of frenetic images that have little in common with, say, the heart-stopping dangers and last-minute rescues in Griffith, the tumultuous waves of frenzy in Gance, the stately displays of massed power in Lean, or even the physically eccentric, hiccupping movements in Spielberg's "Raiders of the Lost Ark." A car or a boat, ramped into the air, glides in slow motion before crashing. A couple holding hands runs away from an explosion, or runs down a corridor as flames (or floods) chase after them. How many times have we seen those action tropes? Repeated again and again, they have assumed a purely formal meaning, like the cherubs and folded drapery in bad religious painting.

THE old light, sure, happy self-confidence of Hollywood moviemaking is gone, perhaps forever. Instead, a jangled, derisive atmosphere of cynicism and self-mockery now surrounds much of the stuff coming out of the big studios. Suddenly, everyone has become an ironist: the postmodernist smirk of diddled reference and weightless play is the form of a new universal knowingness. Traditionally, irony divided the audience into those who understood and those who were left out, but the irony of, say, "Independence Day"—a reworking of old invasion-from-outer-space movies—comes without any point or object. Your not believing for an instant in any part of the fantasy—your revelling in the intentionally crappy movieness of it—is meant to be central to the fun, and for many people it is. "Independence Day" is a festival of spangled, kidding clichés—and a perfect example of the new corporate irony. The picture's status as a media event depends on its being dumb enough not to leave anyone out but knowing enough not to make the audience ashamed of the dumbness.

The hits and flops of corporate irony—the third and fourth "Batman" movies, "The Last Hero," "Wayne's World," "Dumb and Dumber," "True Lies," "Independence Day," "Mission: Impossible," "Men in Black," "Starship Troopers"—are cases not of parody but of pastiche: the merging of ransacked older styles in a play of surfaces. "Ghostbusters," I suppose, stands behind "Men in Black," and behind "Ghostbusters" stand "Dragnet" and other old cop movies and TV shows, but only vaguely—the referents trail off into media nowheresville. Big movies are now spoofs without a target; they draw on a generalized facetiousness. Corporate irony, which ridicules the very thing that it is selling—and ridicules the act of selling, too—is the deadliest weapon ever levelled against artistic seriousness (including comic seriousness). A clever picture like "Men in Black," which is really about nothing at all, inverts the commonplace, but the success of such witty movies about nothing has the effect of making it much harder to say anything even halfway consequential. Cynicism, like bad currency, drives more authentic products from the scene.

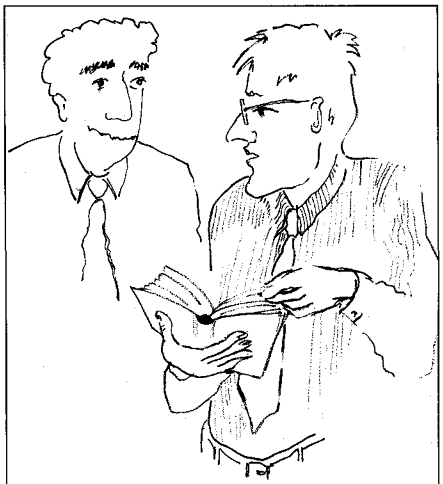
A pox on irony! At the end of the twentieth century, despite such brilliant examples as "Pulp Fiction," irony has become the refuge of the gutless and the accommodating. It functions not as a way of provoking and cleansing but as an attitude of solidarity among consumers who would like to feel hip while they are doing what everyone else is doing. And corporate irony effectively disarms criticism. Anyone who gets too angry at self-mocking triviality risks looking stiff-necked or merely out of it.

A critic may corkscrew himself into the proper joshing attitude, but doing so makes him less a judge than someone hoping to maintain balance with his limbs all askew. He's in danger of ironizing *himself* out of existence.

A NEW generation gap has opened up between older moviegoers, who are holding on to the remnants of modernist seriousness, and younger ones, who are often satisfied by spectacle alone. I know a variety of young intellectuals and advanced media whizzes who go blank whenever their older friends, through some lapse of decorum, speak of the moral valence of a given piece of behavior in a movie—say, the obvious exploitation of sadism and disgust (those putrefying corpses) in David Fincher's hypocritically "moral" police melodrama, "Seven." Lighten *up*, they say. After all, these are just images. And so they are. But photographic images that move in real time still carry a freight of actuality that other images do not. At least, that's the way many older moviegoers feel. Sorely literal, we cannot shake the naïve habit of reacting to images as if they actually referred to something; we still quail when a woman gets punched in the mouth.

Growing up in the violent wards of industrial pop, younger moviegoers have had the dismay pummelled out of them. This is not an intellectual failing; the same moviegoers may express the most refined distinctions about movies. A thirtyish intellectual I know was enraged by Jack Nicholson's saying, at the climax of "As Good as It Gets," that Helen Hunt's criticism of his character has made him "want to be a better man." A novelist suffering from compulsive disorders, Nicholson declares that he will now do what he has failed to do in the past—he will take his pills. And my friend was indignant because he thought that a movie should stick to one thing or another and not mix together a moral conception of character and a clinical-pharmacological conception of character. That this same moviegoer can sit through the cartoon violence of "Replacement Killers" without annoyance suggests not dissociation but a set of responses learned from the media, at a safe remove, before they are learned from life.

The young audience for industrial



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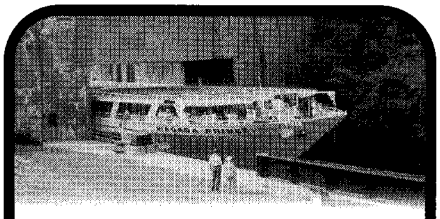

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pop talks about character and plot as if these things were just retractable formulas, a series of strategies to be manipulated toward a given end. To them, identity is a put-on, like a celebrity's riff on the Letterman show. A good part of the young audience wants the euphoria of weightlessness, of not feeling a thing ("I hate *drama*," a friend of my fourteen-year-old son told me with some heat). For older moviegoers, though, the weightlessness may produce not euphoria but nausea. Certainly a critic who comments on the quality of imagery when there is neither emotion nor conceptual daring behind the images—as there wasn't in a high-tech glossy shell like "Mission: Impossible"—is becoming a connoisseur of gleaming rot. He's falling into the chic irony of emptiness.

The trouble isn't that a number of meaningless movies have become hits; such things have happened throughout movie history. The trouble is that critics can no longer appeal to a commonly held set of values. Arguing with pleasure is a mug's game. If people say that they are having good sex, you can hardly tell them that they should give up lovemaking for sunsets. You can only tell audiences satisfied by "Mission: Impossible" or "Men in Black" that there are pleasures they are not experiencing, and then try to say what those pleasures are. But it becomes hard to do so when there's little new art around to offer as an alternative. Unwilling to play the killjoy, a critic may suffer a kind of internal collapse and simply go with the flow of commerce—or, flowing in the opposite direction, he may become a haughty contrarian, retiring from the mainstream movies in favor of Kazakhstani cinema (or whatever) that he encounters at film festivals.

It is perhaps too late to lament the disappearance of the foreign film from a major place in our culture. After many depressing conversations, I have found that younger moviegoers, reared on little but American movies, imagine that mourners for the foreign cinema are talking about some fool's paradise of zinc counters and cappuccino, a pretentious refuge for bearded losers and solemn girls in black. "Cinéastes"—isn't that what they used to call them? It is worse than useless to tell such moviegoers that Bergman and Kurosawa, Antonioni and Fellini, Godard and Truffaut—to name just the most obvious figures—defined our moods in late adolescence, enlarged our sense of romance and freedom and passionate melancholy as well as the expressive possibilities of movies, and that their influence was so pervasive that "Bonnie and Clyde" as well as the careers of Woody Allen, Paul Mazursky, Robert Altman, and a host of other American directors and writers would not have been possible without them. The promotion onslaught creates so dominating a sense of *now* that the past loses all reality; it seems merely a discarded consumer style, faintly ridiculous.

One must quickly add that the current French, Italian, German, and Japanese cinemas are but a remnant of their former selves, and that the new movies from China, Russia, Finland, and Iran, however fascinating, cannot replace the old masterworks in excitement or glamour. "Where are the great foreign films?" a friend asks, by which he means that he refuses to feel guilty about not going when there are no masterpieces to see. He has a point, but even when a good French movie opens here (like Claude Chabrol's "La Cérémonie," in 1996) it's hard to scare up much of an audience for it.

Some would argue that the films of the American independents—strong, small-scaled movies like "Safe" and "Big Night" and "Swingers"—have replaced foreign films, fulfilling the same needs. But it hardly seems fair to mention the independents in the same breath as Kurosawa or Bergman. The American independent filmmakers, reacting to the impersonality and waste of Hollywood, don't work on that scale or seek that kind of vision. The indie movement exists as a perpetual promise—a slippery Sundance of dreams—and not as an achieved body of great work.

An intellectual life devoted to film has become harder and harder to support. As a student at Columbia in the early sixties, I used to walk down Broadway with a friend to the Thalia, on Ninety-fifth Street, and see two Marx Brothers movies, or two René Clair films. But the old revival houses have been chased out of business by the video stores, and so have the 16-mm. rental companies servicing university film-history classes, so that students now end up looking at a masterpiece by Jean

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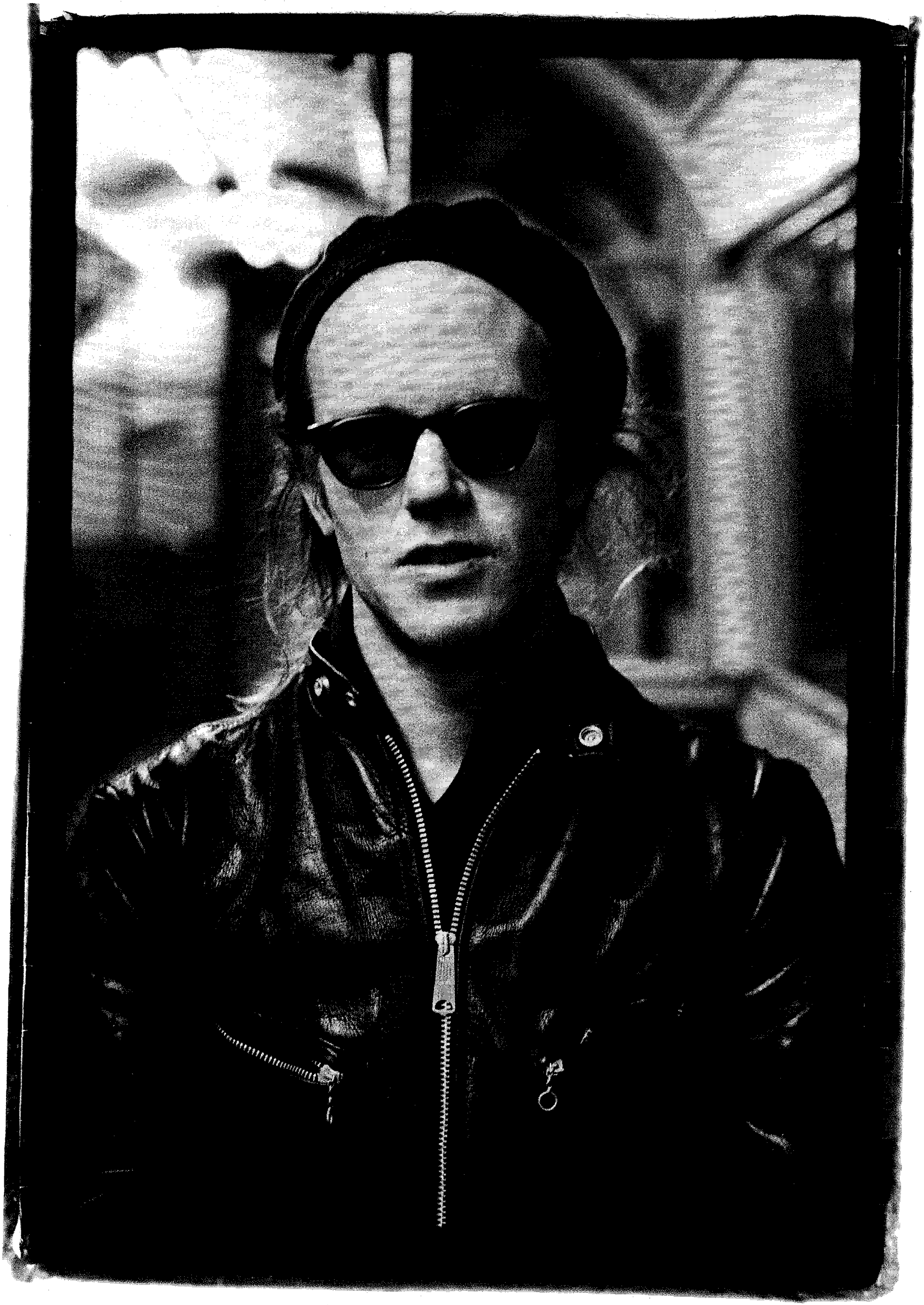
SHOWCASE BY
GERARD MALANGA

SWINGING SEVENTIES

Gerard Malanga, who took the photograph of Andrew Wylie (right), was very much on hand in Andy Warhol's Factory, from its earliest days, in the sixties. Often referred to as the Prime Minister of the Factory, he collaborated with Warhol on the artist's early silk-screen paintings and starred in various Warhol films. (Among them was "Vinyl," in which he had a torture scene and danced with the bullwhip he habitually wore, coiled around one arm.) In 1970, he moved on from the Factory, explaining, "I like to think of myself as having escaped from the Dionysus, which had long claws, articulated hands, and may have been warm-blooded." This portrait of Wylie, which appears in "Resistance to Memory," a new album of Malanga's photographs of prominent cultural personalities in the seventies, was snapped in London. Four young poets—Wylie, Malanga, Victor Bockris, and Patti Smith—were in England to give a reading in a bookstore on Charing Cross Road. Wylie was an anomaly in the group. Educated at St. Paul's and Harvard, he had become something of a renegade literary figure, given to writing simple, crude, declarative poetry that often consisted of terms for the male and female sex organs. It was hardly what his father, a distinguished editor at Houghton Mifflin, would have expected. But Wylie's literary career was short-lived. Concluding that his poems were "less than Miltonic," he set himself up as a literary agent in 1980 and soon—because of the aggressive tactics he had learned as a streetwise member of New York's seventies art scene—became the scourge of the publishing industry. Writers prospered. Publishers and editors groaned at the vast sums asked of them and referred to the upstart in the generally genteel world of books as the Jackal. Now Wylie's stable of some three hundred writers ranges from Susan Sontag and Saul Bellow to Philip Roth, Martin Amis, and Elmore Leonard. They all speak very fondly of him.

—George Plimpton



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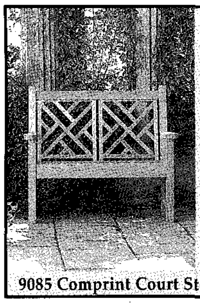

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Renoir or Jean Vigo on a mossy videotape that turns the movie's unique redolence into something as faded as pressed flowers discovered in an old book. A certain pathos attaches itself to earlier movies trapped in inadequate means of presentation: they seem merely decrepit, as if they had been made for people with a hunger for sensuous excitement smaller than our own. As consumerist irony replaces history, nostalgia is forbidden us.

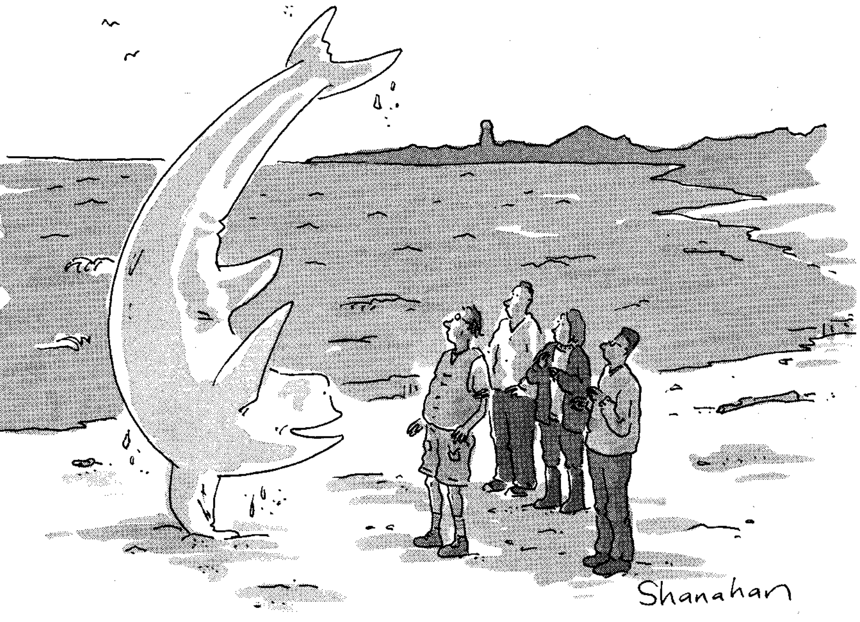
Thirty years ago, a variety of film cultists turned their obsessions into a way of life; they broke up the massness of mass culture, casting a delirious, purplish light of humor and gossip on specialized passions and outlandish tastes. The cultists are mostly gone, and there are now fewer venues for "underground," or avant-garde, movies, many of whose techniques have simply been pulled above ground, into TV advertising and music videos. The recent outbreak in New York of cafés, night clubs, and former factories exhibiting movies one or two nights a week is a lovely development, and Film Forum is an oasis. The museums and art institutes are always there, too, but one can't simply drop into such places on a whim the way moviegoers dropped into revival houses thirty years ago.

Young people create fashions in moviegoing. But do the young now have any special tastes or moviegoing habits of their own? Do they have anything comparable to the old appreciation of, say, forties Hollywood for its passion-fruit camp qualities or of B movies for their lack of hypocrisy? In the late sixties and early seventies, young moviegoers gathered around rock documentaries or such counterculture movies as "Easy Rider" and "Alice's Restaurant." What is the equivalent now? At the recent Sundance Festival distributors and exhibitors were publicly complaining that, apart from "Pulp Fiction" and "Chasing Amy," few independent movies mean anything special to college students.

A new counterculture has grown up on the Internet, not at movies, and passionate connoisseurship now finds its home among TV watchers. Film has not died, but that ornery exasperating thing film culture has been seriously weakened. With some exceptions, smart kids simply join the mass-movie culture the same way that everyone else does. They go to movies not at individual theatres but at malls and twelveplexes, among the video games and roller rinks, where they absorb the quick-turnover attitude toward merchandise which mall life imposes on everyone. Taste as a specialized inside affair ("we" versus the eternal, undifferentiated "them") has largely disappeared, and, as a result, moviegoing has lost its wickedness, its humor, a good part of its savor.

THE critics, at their best, can still provide a little salt and pepper. Yet the ones with temperament, the ones with a feeling for the flesh and bone of a movie, have been largely drowned out by the salesmen and shouters.

If you look at the Sunday *Times* or



"If I were beached, could I do this?"

at any major newspaper, you will see ads for movies that haven't yet opened. These ads are frequently garlanded with raves—not words from reviews that have already been published or broadcast but quotes given over the telephone to publicists after an early screening. Critics whose identity depends on blurbs have no incentive to dislike a movie, or even to moderate their praise, because unless they rave their names will not appear in the ads. Some critics have even been asked to select among blurbs offered by publicity people ("How about 'You'll howl with laughter'? Is that good for you?"), and still others may hire ghosts to write their blurbs or set up reviewing "services" that generate raves in bulk.

Considered as a racket, this sort of thing lacks flair, the grandeur of audacity; it's so familiar that it has become a kind of national joke. *Mad* magazine, hanging in there after all these years, recently sent subscribers an issue wrapped in a mailer covered with blurbs for *Mad* itself. The best blurb: "'Every once in a while a magazine comes along. This is such a magazine!'—Hecky Peckersmith, Peckersmith Press." You may wonder how someone like Hecky can possibly survive as a movie critic. But who's going to tell him he's a fake? The movie companies? The newspaper or the TV station that employs him and obviously finds him useful?

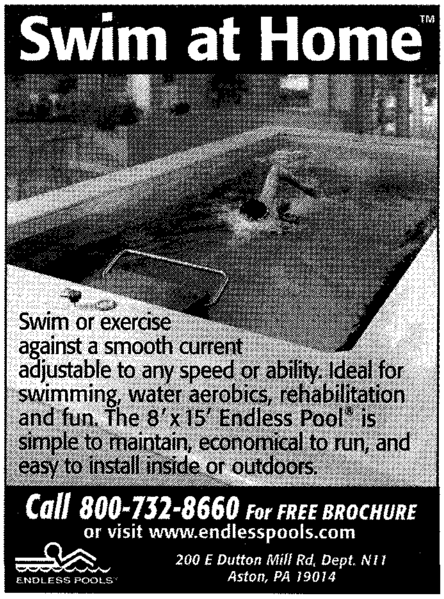
Hail Hecky! Junketing twenty weekends a year at good hotels in Los Angeles or New York, Hecky Peckersmith hardly seems like an absurd man. On the contrary, he seems to know exactly what he's doing. And if Peckersmith is happy, and if his editor or his producer doesn't much care how silly he is, then why make a fuss? One makes a fuss because honest praise is devalued when the studios fill the ads with manufactured raves; the language of criticism has become so debased that the public may not notice any difference between the ads for "L.A. Confidential" and those for trash like "Kiss the Girls."

In the last fifteen years or so, the studios have largely taken control of the coverage of movies. Outside of the trade journals, one can hardly find an analysis of how the command structure of Hollywood makes decisions—routine decisions that often squeeze the art out of movies. The badness of most of our movies is simply accepted with a shrug as a given—as an element in the atmosphere that only a fool would deplore. The waves of promotion, the climate of selling overwhelm some newspaper publishers and their editors, and this may cause them to pressure their critics to shorten or punch up their reviews, to drop reasoning and evocation, to stop reviewing independent films and documentaries. Such editors have allowed themselves to become convinced that serious criticism is an annoying encumbrance—an élitist fraud—which most people can do without.

MOVIE critics dip in and out of shadows, seeking enchantment amid long spells of sardonic disaffection. Much of the time, they slouch and vegetate, cultivating endless memory and strange loyalties. But critics also cultivate hope. Obsessed with a performing art, they need to feel that something is breaking out, that something good is *opening*. They may be outsiders, but the surge of excitement surrounding a new movie sweetens their mood as much as it does that of people working in show business. And, like players everywhere, they hope to get lucky: they would love to feel, exultantly, that they were riding the crest of a movement, or helping some new taste or sensibility make its way in the world, or at least marking the stages in a great director's or actress's career. Handing out grades is never enough.

Critics seldom make things happen, but they can spark the dialogue, the good talk that is one of the prime pleasures of moviegoing. Aroused, they may long to find a way of preaching to their readers, and so they examine small bits of evidence—the spoor and flower of an entertainment system—and offer their modestly immodest comment on the moral life of the country. If they forget that all this matters, and that it matters, too, when bad movies triumph and good ones falter, they will amount to little more than horseflies on the great rump of movie commerce. And if that happens irony will no more save them than it has saved the movies.

Movie love is the critics' resource, their gaiety, their only possible victory. As lovers, they are surely equipped to rescue from its current embarrassment the belief that movies are an art form. And only as lovers can they re-create the fervent connection with bodies, faces, and stories that drew so many people to movies in the first place. ♦



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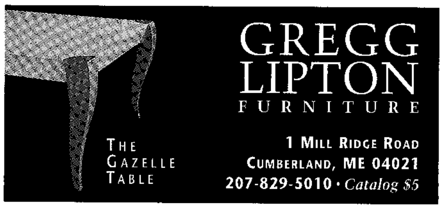

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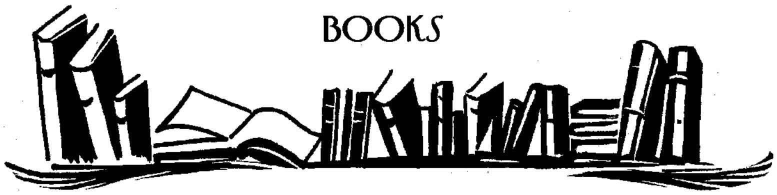
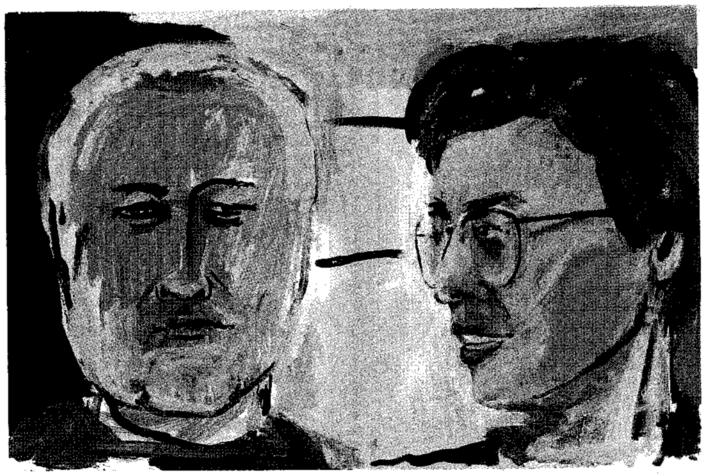


THE COLOR LINE

Two very different novels about abolition.

BY SCOTT L. MALCOMSON

NEAR the end of Russell Banks's vast new novel, "Cloudsplitter" (HarperFlamingo; $27.50), Frederick Douglass and Old John Brown meet in a quarry. With a force of twenty-one men, black and white, Brown is about to attack the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, in what was then the slave state of Virginia, and so spark, he hopes, an uprising of those in bondage. Brown wants to persuade Douglass to play Moses, while he himself plays Aaron: the white man will perform the required blood sacrifice at Harpers Ferry, and then the black man will lead his risen people to freedom. Douglass regretfully declines. For while he may share his friend's view that all true Americans are one colored people, he does not think it has much reality. "You say *us*, John, and you mean *all Americans willing to go to war to end slavery*," Douglass explains. "But every other American who says *us* means race, means *us white people*, or *us Negroes*. You are a noble, good man. But you are nearly alone in this country. Even me, when I say *us*, I mean *we Negroes*."


Russell Banks offers a tragedy and Jane Smiley a comic melodrama.

"Then you will not join me."

"John, I cannot."

Hardly anyone could. On October 16, 1859, the real John Brown took the arsenal at Harpers Ferry; on October 18th, federal troops under Robert E. Lee took it back. No slaves rose up against their masters. Brown was hanged on December 2nd.

Five of the raiders escaped, including Brown's son Owen. In "Cloudsplitter" Owen decides to tell his tale. He has fled from Harpers Ferry all the way to a California mountaintop, there to remain in seclusion until the end of the century, when one Miss Mayo requests an audience for a biography of John Brown she's researching. Owen responds with this book, a very long suicide note addressed to her but, as he explains, also to his father, his brothers, and others among the already dead. It is Owen's brief for Purgatory, where he expects to meet all those who devoted their lives to John Brown.

Owen relates his story more or less chronologically, beginning with the death of his adored mother, in 1832. He tells how his family moved to a farm near a black community in upstate New York, his father haranguing local whites by day and, by night, running escaped slaves north to Canada and freedom. And he describes John Brown's distinct mixture of Old Testament fire and deep

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tenderness, his failings as a businessman, and his eventual abandonment of mainstream abolitionism for guerrilla warfare, first in Kansas and then at Harpers Ferry.

Still, "Cloudsplitter" is very much Owen's tale, not that of his father, and still less that of the real John Brown. In a note, Banks emphasizes the fictional nature of his novel, which reimagines actual occurrences, invents others, and leaves out a great deal. For Banks is after something more morally severe than historical re-creation. He wants to grasp how one might be a good white man in America. In this he is perhaps true to the spirit of the real John Brown.

"For us, the so-called Civil War was merely an aftermath," Owen informs Miss Mayo early in the book. "Or, rather, part of a continuum." He cites events ranging from Toussaint L'Ouverture's revolt in Haiti to Klan night rides as "beads on a string to us, bubbles of blood on a barbed steel strand." His implacable sense of this continuum separates him from his race:

> When the Civil War ended, I found myself feeling towards the rest of my white countrymen, both Northern and Southern, the way Negroes in America, and Indians, too, must always have felt towards white Americans generally—as if the white man's history were separate from ours and did not honor or even recognize ours. That is yet another reason why I have remained silent for so long. I did not want my testimony captured and used in the manufacture of an American history that at bottom is alien to me. That would be treasonous. It would aid and abet our common enemy, who wants nothing more than to declare the war between the races non-existent. Or if not non-existent, then short-lived and well over-

The last two sentences, in particular, have a contemporary ring. This story is being told from the end of the last century, but its sensibility is from the end of ours.

"Cloudsplitter" gnaws at the moral impossibilities of being white. For Owen and his father, being white is so difficult that in dreams they darken their skins to find tranquillity. The real John Brown was indeed unique among prominent white abolitionists in his preference for black colleagues and friends. He didn't trust white people, and this helped make him, as Owen describes the fictional John Brown, "that rarest of things, a trustworthy American white man." Owen argues that his father actually understood that all human beings are equal. From this, together with an inborn vehemence, all else flowed. Something "at the very bottom of his own sense of who he was, of who he was especially in relation to the dominant, lighter race, went out to the souls of American Negroes, so that he was able to ally himself with them," Owen says, "not merely because he believed they were in the right, but because he believed that somehow he himself was one of them." That sentiment was an absurdity, Owen suggests, and possibly reprehensible in its poaching arrogance, yet it was not to be denied, either for his father or for himself.

Owen, however, finds no solace in his father's scripture, and replaces faith with the more turbulent impulses of violence, love, and the need for acceptance. In "Cloudsplitter," as elsewhere in Banks's work, violence provides some people with an inscrutable, propulsive force otherwise missing, and they feel toward it a pitiful gratitude. This violence possesses Owen, who combines it with an equally inscrutable, commanding form of love. The two unfortunately find their object in Lyman Epps, a freedman associate of John Brown. Owen and Epps share many great adventures working on the Underground Railroad, but Owen's wish to be loved and accepted by Epps slowly becomes more than brotherly. This terrifies Owen, not so much from a fear of homosexuality as from a fear of love's impossibility—especially a love that crosses the races.

Epps does not need him. Nobody does. Neither white nor black, Owen feels himself a helpless exile in a racial society, self-absorbed, perpetually discontented. Soon, Epps dies when his pistol discharges: Owen had borrowed the weapon and returned it fully cocked. The death is an accident, but Owen cannot accept it as one: "I was the man, the white man, who, because of Lyman's color and mine, had killed him. It was as if there had been no other way for me to love him. There was nothing for love, now, but all-out war against the slavers. My nature was fully formed; and it was a killer's."

The biggest historical stretch in "Cloudsplitter" is the portrayal of Owen as the source of John Brown's murderous resolve—his father's Iago, as he says. Once Epps has died, Owen

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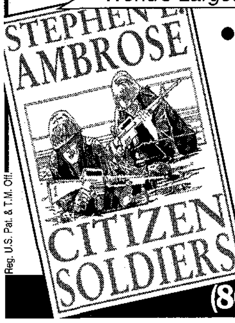

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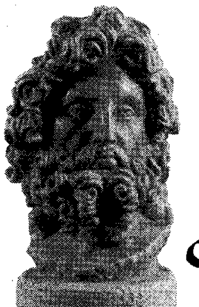

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BRIEFLY NOTED

Matters of Chance, by Jeannette Haien (HarperCollins; $25). Haien didn't write her first novel until she was over sixty; now, in her seventies, she has published her second. Forbearance, it seems, has worked for her. The life of a well-to-do Cleveland lawyer, Morgan Shurtliff, is narrated with orderly elegance, from the vagaries of adolescence, through a resonant midlife span of pure satisfaction, and on to the death of his wife, paralysis, and new romance. Every description mingles missionary vigor with a touch of moral revelation in this kind and compelling book. The story is not shockingly original or breathtakingly daring, but Haien, who has enjoyed a fine career as a pianist, has a musician's ear, and her narrative voice is a study in measured grace.

An Underachiever's Diary, by Benjamin Anastas (Dial; $15.95). To William, the narrator of this slim, bitterly funny novel, failure means success. He examines his life—boyhood disappointment in "utopian" Cambridge, romantic strivings at R—— College, flailing entry into adulthood—and finds comfort in his many triumphant blunders. Reflecting on his Little League days, he recalls the aftermath of a game-ending, self-inflicted injury: "I saw my coach kicking his car door in the parking lot. The umpire offered me a brandy, but I refused. *Life is beautiful*, I thought." The book's veils of irony are light enough to charm even the coolest reader, and its emotional details, particularly those of William's bond with his faultless brother, ring true.

Johannes Brahms: A Biography, by Jan Swafford (Knopf; $35). In September of 1853, Johannes Brahms first called on the composer-pianists Robert and Clara Schumann, in Düsseldorf. Robert soon died, but Clara remained Brahms's intimate friend and colleague for more than forty years—although she confessed that the great composer always seemed a "stranger" to her. Swafford's sprawling biography is an earnest attempt to discover that stranger, who concealed his fragile identity behind a mask of roguish humor and a big, famous beard. It is also an elegy for a composer whose phenomenal public success could never divert him from a life of deliberate loneliness.

Slaves in the Family, by Edward Ball (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $30). For nearly a hundred and seventy years before the Civil War, members of the Ball family owned a string of plantations worked by slaves along South Carolina's Cooper River. After the war, the author's ancestors lost or sold their land and scattered to make new lives, but he wondered what happened to the slaves. This book, a brilliant blend of archival research and oral history, tells what he found—a painful past relieved by the presence of vivid individuals. Ball is saddened to discover that though most of the slaves' descendants are now comfortably middle-class, they remain bitter about what their ancestors endured.

cleaves to the patriarch's side, urging him to quit consulting Job or Deuteronomy and get on with it. So they leave their Underground Railroad labors, leave Lyman's body, "bled gray in the water," and set off for a gully in Kansas, on the front line of slavery's westward expansion, where they slice five pro-slavery white men to death with broadswords. Their act, in fiction as in life, helps give Bleeding Kansas its motif and momentum. More battles follow, over the next three years, until Harpers Ferry.

One can't help wondering whether Russell Banks ran into Jane Smiley out on the Kansas prairie, dowsing for abolitionist spirits. It's certainly curious that two prominent white American writers have just published historical novels about abolition. It may be odder still that the two writers' books have so little in common. Smiley's "The All-True Travels and Adventures of Lidie Newton" (Knopf; $26) is a comic melodrama in the voice of a young Illinois woman who marries an abolitionist, heads to Kansas, and has many amazing experiences there. Lidie Newton does a splendid job of keeping her spirits up despite an unusually cold winter, the sacking of Lawrence, numerous deaths owing to privation, and several murders, including those of her husband and her beloved horse, Jeremiah.

Smiley has a lot of fun spinning her goofy, quick-draw characters around the patient Lidie, whom they frequently interrupt. One of Smiley's more engaging inventions is David B. Graves, a verbose merchant and stalwart purveyor of plot twists. As Graves pilots Lidie toward the bedside of her expiring husband, he discourses on the benefits of urinating into bullet wounds to clean them. He had assisted in such a treatment once, for a hip wound, and he tells her, "After two days, the man got up and walked, naked from the hip down on one side, of course, walked right into town like that, easy as you please, but he did get over that wound in no time at all. Said the Indians told him about that. But that's what everyone says. If the Indians always said what they are supposed to have said, then they would be talking all the time, but as you know, Indians are by and large a taciturn folk."

When Lidie is caught helping a slave escape and ends up in jail, a visitor suggests that her fate is tragic. But a tragedy seemed to her "to be something that took place on one spot—at home, perhaps, where all the characters were gathered together and all knew each other and the actions of each destroyed the other. I myself didn't feel like a character in a tragedy."

And with good reason. The cleverness that Smiley brings to bear on her story, the marvellous facility of her writing, the occasional melancholy of Lidie's meditations upon what is, after all, a succession of calamities—these seem to portend a deepening, even to beg for one. But the author skips her stone from one side of the lake and it just goes skip, skip, skip, until it plunks on the far shore. Whatever possibilities there were for the novel to gain moral purchase are lost when Lidie abandons her always weak hold on principles. "Now that I was in jail," she reflects, "I didn't know what I thought about principles anymore. It seemed as though the main result of having any was dislocation, injury, pain, and death. But of course, that left out Lorna." Lorna is the slave she helped, who was herself captured, then sold down the river by her master, whereas Lidie was returned to Illinois, thanks to the gentlemanly intervention of the same master. Finally home, Lidie completes her adventures in a state of world-weariness flecked with self-pity.

"But of course, that left out Lorna": it is either a brief, forgettable sentence or a window onto a distinctively American agony, depending on who you are when you read it and on how much of you goes south with Lorna. Very little of Jane Smiley's self-centered heroine does, and so her tale of abolitionism may be comic and sad but not tragic.

Russell Banks's "Cloudsplitter" is a tragedy, offering up two white men, Owen and John Brown, who go as far south with Lorna as any white men could. Banks gives us an American identity in the form of a divided whole—a notion that is very old among black writers but much less so among their white counterparts, particularly when, as in Banks's novel, it involves love and moral duty rather than narcissism and the theft of new pleasures. Banks has taken the colored "we" of his Brown seriously, which makes "Cloudsplitter" a masterwork not only of white American fiction but of another divided whole, American literature. ♦

THE THEATRE

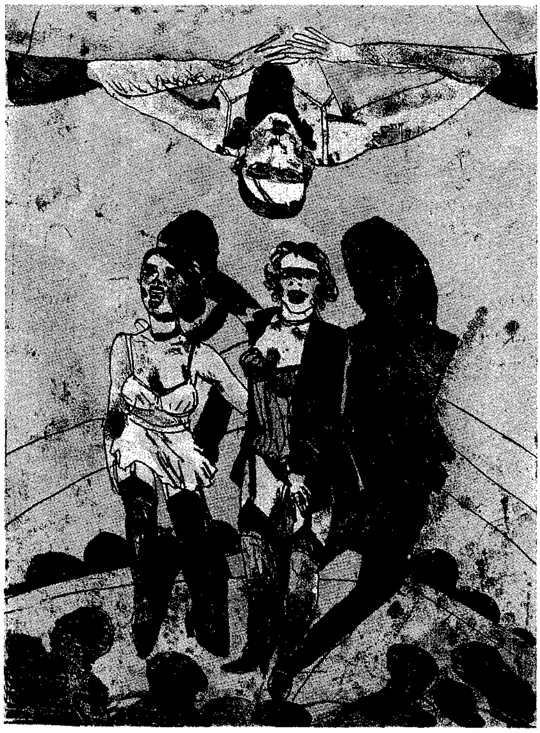
THE GATHERING STORM

Two storied musicals return to Broadway.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

IT'S an oddly fitting coincidence that revivals of "Cabaret" and "The Sound of Music" should turn up at the same time. The two shows are planets apart, but they have their origins in the same Big Bang: the juggernaut of Nazi Germany. On a more mundane level, the shows have in common the weight of their own successful pasts as Broadway productions and as vivid, memorable movies. But the only thing that the new "Cabaret" has in common with the movie version is green nail polish—worn then by Liza Minnelli, and now, onstage at Henry Miller's Theatre (renamed the Kit Kat Klub, in honor of the show), by Natasha Richardson, as Sally Bowles, the self-invented young woman who survives being down and out in Berlin by living it up. (She's the Holly Golightly of Weimar.) That similarity, though, shows how dramatically different this new production is: Minnelli was all high gloss and dazzle and perfect hair, with long, ladies-who-lunch nails; Natasha Richardson's hair is visibly bleached and not squeaky clean or well cut, and her nails are untended and short. In a hurry to be somebody, and going nowhere fast, she's not interested in finishing touches. Everything about this production is more raw and immediate, including the audience's proximity to the actors: in this intimate night-club setting, seated at round tables for four and sipping drinks (you can, if you like, buy a bottle of Roederer Cristal for three hundred dollars), you're uneasily aware of having bought into the evening's entertainment—of being more than a spectator at the passing parade.

And it is a parade you can't tear your eyes away from: the figures onstage are garish, ghoulish, and aggressively arresting, beginning with the astonishing Alan Cumming in the part of the Emcee (the Joel Grey role). Cumming, a Scottish actor well known in England and here making his Broadway début, comes on wearing a long black leather coat and boots, his lips colored blood red, and he stares at you with big eyes out of a long, pointy pale face; the look in his eyes—eyes highlighted with blue eyeshadow, and the edges of the lids ringed with red—tells you he knows that you're both dreading and dying to know what's under that coat. And you know that he's going to show you. There is a bow tie, as befits a master of ceremonies, but it's attached to a para-



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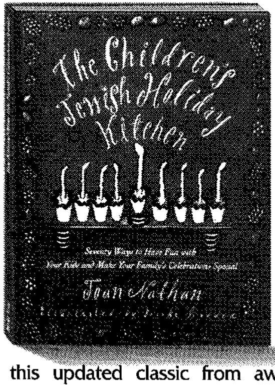
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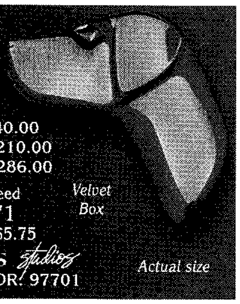

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chute harness, which wraps around his body in a way that deliberately emphasizes his crotch. His nipples have been rouged and glittered, and he appears to have bruises on his torso. Cumming is a spectacle of mixed messages, and he forces you to ask yourself what you think you're seeing, and what it might mean. Throughout the show, Cumming watches us watching him. At times, he crouches like a monkey on a platform above the stage, a posture that resonates with one of the show's best-known pieces, in which the Emcee dances with a gorilla and sings the satirical love song that's both a declaration of sexual defiance and a slap at anti-Semitism.

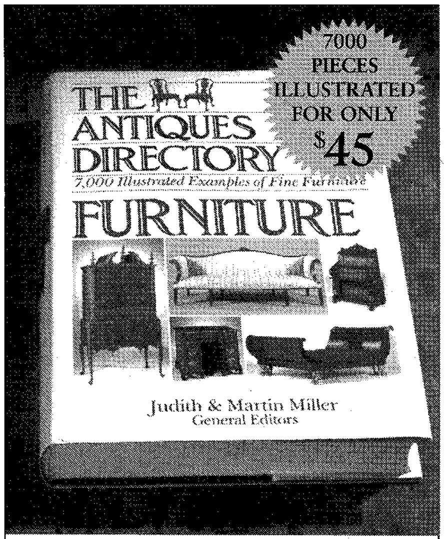
Everything in this daring production, the brainchild of Sam Mendes (who directed a version of "Cabaret" five years ago at a small theatre in London, the Donmar Warehouse, of which he is artistic director), seems to ask the audience to what extent we are participating in—perhaps collaborating in—the events unfolding before our eyes. It's not a revival so much as it is a thinking through of the original. (It's also a tribute to the richness of the ur-material, Christopher Isherwood's "Berlin Stories.") The thrusting, angular Bob Fosse moves that are so inextricably associated with "Cabaret" lent an atmosphere of dancing on the edge of a volcano. This time around, the volcano has caused chaos even before it fully erupts; the dancers look wounded, their stockings are ripped, and they seem eager not to entertain but simply to survive. The fact that they all have imperfect bodies (clad in dingy underwear) makes it even harder for us to distance ourselves from their fate; they're not that different from us.

Natasha Richardson's Sally casts a spectral glow, and has a closed-off, catlike quality that renders her very touching for being ultimately untouchable. In the scene where Sally, having rejected the pleas of her American lover Cliff (John Benjamin Hickey) to leave with him and live in Pennsylvania, returns to work at the Kit Kat Klub and sings the title song of the show, Richardson is able to suggest the tangle of emotions, and the desperation, behind Sally's glaze of self-delusion. She's bright-eyed as she begins to sing, but her hands quiver; then she seems to be willing herself to look strong; then she looks frightened; at the end, in a kind of consumptive collapse, she knocks over the microphone stand as she stumbles off the stage.

Ron Rifkin, as a Jewish fruit seller, and Mary Louise Wilson, as the owner of the boarding house where Cliff and Sally live, are wonderful together; they are so warm and appealing that you hardly know whom to side with when Wilson decides she can't marry him because he's a Jew and she simply can't afford to take the risk. A few elements of the production are less successful. Near the end, there is a traffic jam of superfluous message-bearing images and symbolism; and Hickey's Cliff is boorish and uninteresting—no one would leave Berlin with him. Over all, though, this "Cabaret" is everything it should be: sensational, disturbing, and absolutely mesmerizing.

I WISH I either wholly hated "The Sound of Music" or loved it unconditionally, just for the pleasure of having an all-encompassing response, but I can neither join the big group hug nor completely turn my back on it. On a deep, cellular level, I loathe most of the lyrics, and on an equally primitive level I find myself helplessly moved by some of the melodies. So there I am—one minute wanting to crush any rose with a raindrop on it, the next minute weeping in the edelweiss. I may be of two minds, but the story of the von Trapp family as told in "The Sound of Music" is of a piece—its core of solid-gold sentimentality gives it the inexorable pull of a fairy tale, and its power cannot be denied. A little humor—a little reality, that is—would drastically devalue its currency, but one can't help wanting, Mel Brooks-like, to inject some comic truths into the story: that Georg von Trapp's career as a naval officer dried up, as it were, when, after the First World War, Austria was left without a coast; or that an intra-family lawsuit is now pending over money matters in the family corporation.

In the revival at the Martin Beck, Rebecca Luker's Maria is enormously winning, and most of the children are close enough to delightful. The only weak link in the cast is Michael Siberry, whose Georg comes across as lightweight and blow-dried rather than dashing. This production doesn't linger in the memory, somehow; there's music in them thar hills, but the producers didn't seem to find a whole lot of fresh air up there. ♦



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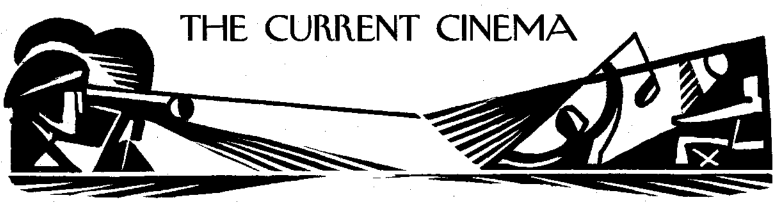


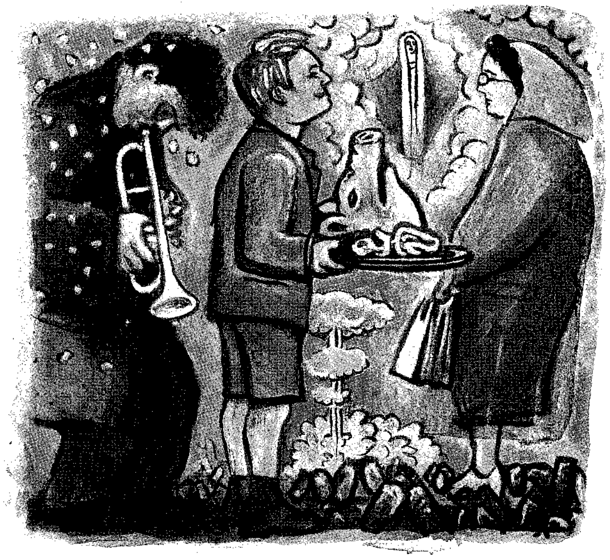
THE CURRENT CINEMA

THE DAMAGE DONE

Neil Jordan's unsentimental look back.

BY DAPHNE MERKIN

CHILDREN, with their luxuriant and fierce inner lives, would seem to be a natural subject for movies. Yet American filmmakers have never been particularly interested in the complex reality of childhood, preferring to dip into two opposing but equally cutie-pie conventions—one the tap-dancing joie de vivre of Shirley Temple, and the other the sugar-coated cartoon sadism of Macaulay Culkin in "Home Alone." Europeans, by contrast, tend to avoid the fluff of sentiment; they're more attached to the bittersweet narratives that memory yields. Vittorio De Sica's "Bicycle Thief," René Clément's "Forbidden Games," François Truffaut's iconic "400 Blows," Ingmar Bergman's "Fanny and Alexander"—these belong to a rich tradition that observes the sometimes carefree, sometimes brutal shadings of childhood with a stringent and respectful eye. Such films proceed from the notion that identity is fluid and continuous, rather than jagged and disjointed: children are what we once were, and we are what they will become. The link is there.



The revenge of fantasy: Stephen Rea, Eamonn Owens, and Fiona Shaw in "The Butcher Boy."

RUSSELL CHRISTIAN

The Irish director Neil Jordan's daring new film, "The Butcher Boy," adapted from the novel by Patrick McCabe and cowritten by the two of them, is a remembrance of terrible things past, narrated in a tone of despairing hilarity. The film has the porous, unfiltered quality of a child's mind—absorbing everything without being able to make sense of any one thing. From the beginning, it moves at a high pitch, with a kind of nervous energy that suggests the workings of a vivid imagination. That imagination belongs to twelve-year-old Francie Brady (Eamonn Owens), whose well-populated fantasy life pads him against the grimness of his existence. Francie and his family live in the cloistered Northern Irish town of Carn (based on Clones, McCabe's home town), where sympathy is in short supply and gossip flourishes in its stead. The alleys are narrow, and the prevailing mood is bleak, except when a bright yellow sign for "Kodak Film" or a string of colored light bulbs suddenly cheers things up. It's the early sixties: ruddy-faced women in kerchiefs and hair rollers hang out at the grocery store, listening to the radio and hearing how the world might end as Kennedy discusses the Cuban missile crisis in his patrician twang. Black-and-white television has arrived, bringing pop-cultural images of derring-do and science fiction ("The Fugitive," "The Lone Ranger," and aliens from other planets), which Francie absorbs and converts for his own use.

Francie's parents are constantly at each other's throats: his father (Stephen

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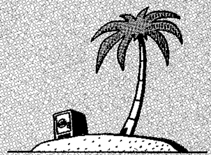

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Rea) is "the best drinker in town," simmering with anger at his wasted musical promise and the circumstances of his own childhood; his mother (Aisling O'Sullivan) is a fragile creature who takes "tablets" in order to cope and is carted off to what her son thinks of as a "garage" after she has a breakdown. Francie discusses this and other problems with "the one and only Joe Purcell, King of All Time" (Alan Boyle), his blood brother and cohort in misadventure, who serves as a buffer between him and the rest of the world. But Joe is helpless in the face of Francie's growing humiliation and outrage, which is focussed on Mrs. Nugent (Fiona Shaw), the town snob. Mrs. Nugent, who has returned from England "with all these airs and graces" and has strong feelings about the Brady household, which she declares a "pigsty," personifies all the unfairness and cruelty of Francie's life. Her son is the object of his unmitigated envy, since he has everything that Francie doesn't: piano lessons, crisp comic books, a TV that works. As Francie's situation goes from woebegone to worse—his mother commits suicide while he's run off to Dublin for the day, to escape his parents' fighting—his feisty spirit turns violent. Increasingly isolated, and consumed by a wish to take revenge on his perceived nemesis, he wreaks havoc on the Nugents' orderly home in a grotesque fashion. From there on, nothing can stop his descent into madness—not the intervention of a well-meaning priest at a boys' school, not the electroshock therapy he receives in a psychiatric hospital, and not even visions featuring the Virgin Mary herself (played by Sinead O'Connor).

The emotional intensity of all this is matched by the intensity of the film's visual style, which weaves scraps of Francie's imaginings together with images of nuclear catastrophe, bringing a hallucinatory element to the ordinary, cramped realism of Carn. (In one sequence, Francie, who has been heavily sedated, walks through a bombed-out townscape littered with charred pigs' heads.) As a depiction of the way a gifted boy responds to deprivation and cruelty, passing from inspired lunacy to outright craziness, "The Butcher Boy" is without cinematic parallel. Indeed, it is so potent that it feels almost too close for comfort. The screenplay places us firmly inside Francie's clamorous head, with its competing adult and child voices, even before we know what to make of his oddly composed outlook: "Of all the wrong things I done," he confides in a voice-over as the opening credits roll to the jaunty strains of "Mack the Knife," "the apples were the first—and Francie Brady didn't need any snake to give him one." Eamonn Owens, with his thatch of red hair, his freckles, and his shining eyes, makes Francie's boyish zest and talent for mimicry as real as his pain; it is easy to imagine that in better circumstances he might have grown up to be another Dylan Thomas. Watching Owens, one is reminded of the grasshopper-like perspective of the young, for whom a plate of custard-cream cookies can loom as large as a conversation in which one's future is being decided. Fiona Shaw, who is got up in an acid-green wardrobe, black Cruella De Vil glasses, and dark lipstick, plays Francie's enemy with great subtlety—not as a caricature but as a woman lost in her own disdain, at first puzzled and then frightened by the fury she has unleashed.

Jordan's approach, with its judicious use of Francie's fantasies, gives "The Butcher Boy" a sadly farcical, surreal edge. This doesn't detract from the clarity with which Jordan sees the rural town, mired in religion and liquor, or the indifference of its inhabitants. Because his realism is veined with tenderness (this was especially evident in "The Crying Game"), he can take on fairly savage material without crossing over into perverse sensationalism. This strange and haunting movie isn't for everyone, not least because the County Monaghan dialect is extremely difficult to understand. If you're willing to enter the movie's idiom, however, there's a lot to be had on a sheerly visceral basis. I saw "The Butcher Boy" twice—once for the impact and once for the finer points—and both times I wished that someone had stepped in to save Francie Brady. But that would have made for a different movie—more sentimental, and perhaps more to American tastes. This one is tough on the audience. It reminds us that it's possible to be nostalgic—as, in the end, Francie is—even for a bad childhood. ♦

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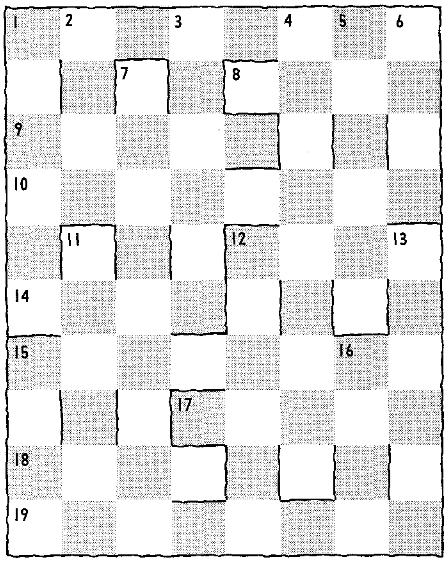

ACROSS

1 Actor died in awful bit part (4,4)
8 Understood pronunciation of a Greek letter (4)
9 Seat us next to that woman (5)
10 Once again make part of a harness with long slit (8)
12 Edges away from writer's pony (4)
14 Mr. Young heard sound of relief (4)
15 Doctor catches one of the fish (8)
17 Shabby jazz musician left Kentucky (5)
18 Make an alteration by beginning to press fiber (4)
19 Long and arduous part of anybody's séance (8)

DOWN

1 Obscure nonsense: passages from reviews (6)
2 Flower got bigger (4)
3 Star of "Mrs. Brown" gets back of hair wet (6)
4 Meet in brief before court (9)
5 Maverick sent in Summer Olympics competition (6)
6 Make fun of true intellect (4)
7 Slender, sticky whatchamacallit (9)
11 Felt sorry for chief of police I got even with (6)
12 G.I.'s car runs illegal imports from Cuba (6)
13 Embargo includes any plant from India (6)
15 At first, sale offered half off for part of New York (4)
16 Great resistance to a vegetable (4)

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cultural chicago

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8 S + TAG
10 G + ROOM
11 D + RIVE
12 S(AR)IS
13 MAG + US
15 SO + H + O
16 SELDOMER (anag.)
17 EDGE (hidden)
18 V + EST

DOWN

1 POSE (*Poe's* hom.)
2 AL(T)ERNATED (*De la Renta* anag.)
3 R(EA + D)INGS
4 SNARE (anag.)
5 DEMOLISHES (anag.)
6 AR(A)M + IS
9 FOURSOME (anag.)
11 DEMI'S + E
12 SUEDE (*swayed* hom.)
14 S + ORT

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

SCHOOL AUCTION

BY CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

SILENT

Item #12—A Year of Child-Raising. Midge and Fred Simpson will come to your home, move in, and take over parenting duties of your child. Please, no teen-agers!

Item #23—Golf and Dinner with Principal Benson. Eighteen holes at your own country club, followed by dinner "on you" at a four-star restaurant of Principal Benson's choosing. Fore!

Item #37—Ten Hours of Porn-Surfing on the Internet. Computer teacher Milton Fish will come to your house and show you the hottest new Web "sights," including the Monica Lewinsky House of Polkes Kissing, and Michael Kinsley's sizzling new 'zine, *Slut*. Milt will also bring you up to date on what to do when your Internet hosts abuse that credit-card number you transmitted in a moment of weakness.

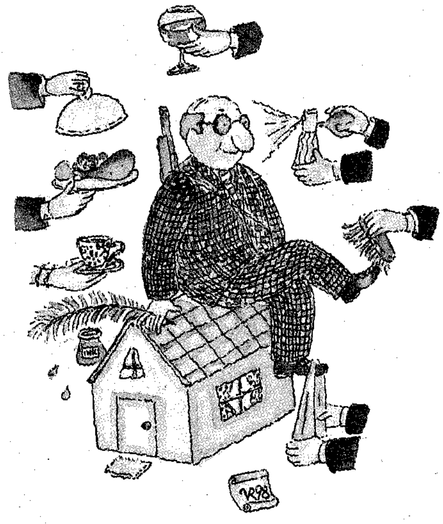
Item #53—"You Don't Know Me, But My Son Is Applying to Yale . . ." One of our most special items: a list of home phone numbers for the directors of admissions to the entire Ivy League. Plus their numbered Swiss bank accounts and wire-transfer information. Why take chances?

Item #79—House-sitting by Principal Benson. Who better to look after your luxury home in the country than our own Principal "Bon Vivant," as he hunkers down to write college recommendations and practice his skeet shooting? (Note: Houses with cook—French if possible—butler, valet, driver, pool, jacuzzi, sauna, and masseuse are preferred.)

LIVE

Item #1—Your Own Contract Killing. You don't need a lot of vowels in your name to put the fear of God into your business competitors, nosy neighbors, or sluggish contractors. Gennaro "Mister" Tommasso, father of second grader "Cool" Louie, will arrange to have the person of your choice "sleep with the fishes"—or have his legs broken a little, if you're just trying to get his attention. Makes a perfect companion to Silent Auction #53. An item they can't refuse!

Item #13—A Week's Idyll in Iceland. Discover the romance of "66 North" when you and your family spend a week in the peat hut where the ancestors of Firkmunnssen and Fudgisdottir, parents of seventh grader Fudgisdottirsdottir, have been living since the time of Nyall Fish-Frightener. You'll enjoy a breathtaking view of Lake Lavva, at the foot of the dramatic Shrinkpekker Glacier, but remember to test the water before you jump in. During the occasional eruptions of nearby Mt. Upchukkir, it can reach a toasty two hundred degrees—Celsius!



Item #29—A Bite of the Big Apple. Here's a package that will have you singing "I Love New York!" You'll arrive by motor coach at the dramatic Port Authority Bus Terminal and stay in a luxury (shared-bath) suite at the "happening" Hotel Majestic, in New York's fashionable Clinton, a short hop from the Marquis Theatre, where, subject to availability, you'll enjoy partially obscured seats at Broadway's runaway smash hit "The Capeman." After a delicious dinner at HoJo's, you'll dance the night away at the LaGuardia Motor Hotel Lounge, so "in" with the New York's A-list. All you have to remember is: The Bronx is up and the Battery's down.

Item #34—"Say, Have You Lost Weight?" Be prepared to be asked this again and again as Dr. Herb "Hoover" Kornberg liposuctions away those love handles. Tired of having to ask the caddy to tee up your golf ball? Of having taken so much Phen-Fen you can't remember your own name? Isn't it about time you did something for yourself?

Item #45—"On Your Knees, Worm!" An hour of one-on-one domination by Mistress Leona, the "strictest gal in town" (*Consumer Reports*). Whether you get off on cleaning the floor with your tongue or are into something "heavier," like being swabbed with elephant pheromone and trampled by a wild herd of inflamed pachyderms, this is a sure way to unwind after a tough day of bossing others around at the office. A five-hundred-dollar value!

Item #60—Wine Appreciation with Principal Benson. Our own "Wine Enthusiast" will tour your cellar and taste a wide range of bottles to make sure none have "turned." ♦

When did every place start to feel like the same place?

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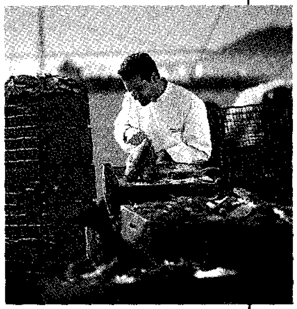

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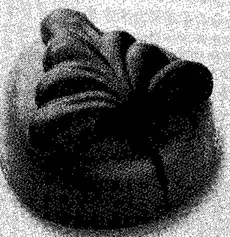

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